TAWḤĪDIC ALLAH OR THE TRINITY IN VIEW OF INHERENT HUMAN RELATEDNESS

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Dissertation

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Introduction

One strand of historical discussion between devotees of Islam and Christianity highlights

the impasse of the opposing viewpoints on the nature of the Deity (or how He is understood to

exist) respective to each religion.[1] On the one hand, Islam's understanding of *Tawḥīd* affirms in

the strongest terms Allah's aloneness, without partner, rival, or equal.[2] On the other hand, the

Christian doctrine of Trinity asserts that God lives forever as intra-relationships, not alone

because the one God is an eternal coinhering community of equals.[3] This impasse is all the more

immoveable because both doctrines are derived from each respective religion's Scriptures: the

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[1] Timothy of Baghdad, *Apology for Christianity*, Questions and Answers 1 and 2. Kindle. "And our [Islamic] king said to me: "Do you believe in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?"—And I answered: "I worship them and believe in them."—Then our king said: "You, therefore, believe in three Gods?"—And I replied to our king: "The belief in the above three names, consists in the belief in three Persons, and the belief in these three Persons consists in the belief in one God. The belief in the above three names, consists therefore in the belief in one God. We believe in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as one God" (Ques. and Ans. 1). "And our [Islamic] King said to me: "If He is one, He is not three; and if He is three, He is not one; what is this contradiction?"—And I answered: "The sun is also one, O our victorious King, in its spheric globe, its light and its heat and the very same sun is also three, one sun in three powers" (Ques. and Ans. 2). "And the King said: "You appear to believe in three heads, O Catholicos."—And I said: "This is certainly not so, O our victorious King. I believe in one head, the eternal God the Father, from whom the Word shone and the Spirit radiated eternally, together, and before all times, the former by way of filiation and the latter by way of procession, not in a bodily but in a divine way that befits God. This is the reason why they are not three separate Gods" (Ques. and Ans. 2).

When writing about how Christians and Muslims understand "God," without qualifying how each religion's unique attributes predicated of "God" distinguish "God" from the other religion, the term "Deity" is used. Said differently, the term "Deity" is employed when focusing on the commonalities of the "divine" proper to each religion without supposing that the "Deity" is ultimately the same because of *prima facie* similarities. When speaking of the unique attributes (or lack thereof) predicated of the "Deity" according to Christianity, either "God" or "Trinity" is the term employed. When speaking of the unique attributes (or lack thereof) predicated of the "Deity" according to Islam, "Allah" is the term employed.

Also, the composite word, "nature/attribute," is used because some sects in Islam affirm knowing some measure of Allah's attributes but hold Allah's nature to be unknowable (Al-Nahl 74) whereas Christians within the orthodox tradition of Nicene-Constantinopolitan Christianity affirm the knowability of God's nature both through Scripture and Nature (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed; cf. also Romans 1:20; 3).

[2] Qur'an, Surah az-Zumar 39: 62; Surah ash-Shurah 42: 11 – 12; Surah al-Ikhlas 112: 1-3**;** Surah al-Muminoon 23: 84-89; Surah az-Zukhruf 43: 9; Surah az-Zukhruf 43: 87; Surah al-Ankaboot 29: 63; Surah az-Zumar 39: 3; Surah Yunus 10: 18; Surah al-Kafiroon 109: 2-5; Surah Sad 38: 5; Surah al-Mumtahinah 60: 24; Surah al-Fath 48: 6.

[3] John 1:1; 17 (whole chapter); 20:28; Matthew 28:18 – 20; Philippians 2:6 – 9; Hebrews 1:1 – 3, Revelation 1:5 – 9; 22:13; Mark 14:62; 1 Corinthians 8:6 (the modified *Shema*); Romans 9:5; Titus 2:13.

Qur'an for Islam and the New Testament for Christianity.[4] In terms of the Old Testament, Islam

holds the Torah (Genesis – Deuteronomy) and the Psalms to be Scripture while Christianity

maintains the typical Old Testament canon (Torah, Ketuvim, and Nevi'im). Despite the Old

Testament Scriptures held in common, the contestation on the nature of the Deity becomes

clearly demarcated when the New Testament and Qur'an are compared.[5] Moreover, Islam does

not directly theologize about the nature of the Deity from the Old Testament. Along these lines,

the exchange between Muslims and Christians has largely dealt with the *a priori* question of the

"inspiration" of the Qur'an and the New Testament. Within the aims of this dissertation, the

question will be posed: can an *a posteriori* apologetic be developed, working cataphatically from

the existence of human relationships back towards the nature of the Deity and asking which

nature (or how the Deity exists) better accounts for the evidence of human relationships?[6] This is

an abductive argument, inferring from the evidence to the best explanation.[7] This *a posteriori*

apologetic (and polemic) provides a potential tool for Christianity to contend with Islam and can

become part of a cumulative apologetic in that regard, supplementing the long history of *a priori*

polemic against the inspiration of the Qur'an.[8] Such an argument will undergird the authority of

Christianity's view of the Deity while undermining Islam's view.

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[4] Although both religions hold to the Old Testament as well, the contention between Christianity and Islam is not as sharp until the New Testament and the Qur'an are compared.

[5] Islam holds the Torah, the Psalms (*Zabor*), and the Gospels (*Injil*) as Scripture.

[6] Cataphatic(ally) means here thinking about God from below, taking what can be known from human tradition, culture, reason, or nature and then interrogating what is known about God in relation to this evidence. Specifically to this prospectus, what is known about God differs according to each, respective religion and so how what is known about God will relate differently to human relationships.

[7] Douglas Walton, *Abductive Reasoning* (Alabama Press, 2005), iiiv, 31, 122, and 142.

[8] John of Damascus, "On Heresies," in *The Fathers of the Church*, eds. Bernard Peebles, Robert Russell, Thomas Halton, Hermigild Dressler, William Tongue, and Sister M. Josephine Brennan, Vol. 37, *Saint John of Damascus, Writings: The Fount of Knowledge, The Philosophical Chapters, On Heresies, and On the Orthodox Faith*, trans. Frederic H. Chase Jr. (Washington D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1958), 101. " . . .

Thesis

This dissertation is therefore an inquiry into the nature of the Deity in view of human relationships. Human relationships exist and they are definitive of what it means to exist as a human, i.e., they are an inescapable aspect of humanity. Does Christianity's doctrine of Trinity or Islam's doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah more adequately account for the existence of human relationships and their inescapability?[9] This dissertation is, then, a comparison between the *Tawḥīdic* — or monadic — nature of Allah with the Trinitarian nature of God in order to evaluate and clarify which doctrine is the best explanation for human relationships. The hope is to demonstrably argue that Christianity's doctrine of Trinity has greater explanatory depth and scope over the doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah in accounting for human relationships and their inescapability.

Rationale

Survey of Literature

In an effort to show the unique contribution of this present work, the pertinent literature will be surveyed in order of importance and relevance to the stated thesis. The most important works are those comparing Christianity and Islam. This is not to say that works only on the Trinity or those merely on *Tawḥīd* should be overlooked. These works are important foundational domains for the present inquiry, but they do not cover what it developed hereafter.

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and although you do possess both wives and property and asses and so on through witnesses, yet it is only your faith and your scriptures that you hold unsubstantiated by witness."

[9] The "inescapability" of human relationships is evident in the biological process of a mother and father procreating to produce a child. In this sense, every person is always a "you" before s/he is an "I." By the time someone is cognizant s/he is an "I," the brute fact of human relationality has long been definitive of his/her human experience. It is this plain evidence of the human experience that undergirds the claim that human relationships are inescapable.

This being so, literature that directly compares Islam and Christianity are the foci, and the attention spent on each work is commensurate with its relevance for this thesis.

Timothy Tennent's *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable* deals most directly with the present work's topics.[10] Tennent first comments on the Islamic doctrine of Allah, highlighting *Tawḥīd* in particular and the consequence of *shirk* for compromising *Tawḥīd*.[11] Tennent then briefly points out Islam's difficulty in reconciling *Tawḥīd* with Allah's many attributes such as the "ninety-nine beautiful names." This difficulty with analogical predication is a recurrent issue for Islam.[12] Tennent presents the teaching of immanence with transcendence in the Qur'an, but he only marginally speaks towards what this means for Allah's ability to relate either to Himself or to creatures.[13] Building upon Tennent's point about analogical predication, another question reveals that the difficulty is no less for the Qur'an than for Islamic theology: if Allah is so "high" that nothing from creation can be appropriated to describe Him (Surah 16:74), then why is immanence understood by a spatial analogy in the Qur'an (Surah 50:16)? Allah is not spatially situated like creatures, but the Qur'an does not hesitate to use the analogy of how close a jugular vein is to an individual person to describe Allah's nearness. It is this contradiction — nothing is

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[10] Timothy Tennent, "Part 3, Christianity and Islam," in *Christianity at the Religious Roundtable: Evangelicalism in Conversation with Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002).

[11] Ibid., 144 – 145. *Shirk* means "sharing" or "associating," and, in Islam, it is the sin of associating anyone or anything with the divinity of Allah. *Tawḥīd* means "one" or "oneness" and is used, as will substantiated later, to convey Allah's utter simplicity and uniqueness.

[12] Cf. Tennent, *Christianity at the Roundtable*, 147 – 149; Montgomery W. Watt, *Islam and Christianity today: a Contribution to Dialogue* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), 51; Michael Oldham, "The Attributes of Allah," in *Allah and Elohim* (Tate Publishing, 2013), chap. 3, introduction. Kindle; Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *Arabia: the cradle of Islam : studies in the geography, people and politics of the peninsula, with an account of Islam and mission work* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1900), chap. 12, sec. 1. Kindle. Analogical predication is activity of predicating something of the Deity that is taken from the world, creatures, or humans. This will be looked at more closely a bit later.

[13] Tennent, *Christianity at the Roundtable*, 150.

predicable of Allah from creation, but then the Qur'an predicates something from creation of Allah — that is the difficulty Tennent emphasizes.

That God *qua* Trinity is immanently relational is Tennent's final apologetic defense and is offered in an exchange between himself and three Muslims.[14] The representatives of the Sunni and Shi'ite groups respond by emphasizing how either relational terms like "father and son" are inappropriate to be predicated of Allah (Sunni) or affirm that all attributes predicated of Allah are an assault on the purity of *Tawḥīd* and should be abandoned (Shi'ite).[15] The Sufi representative made some movement towards describing a relationship shared between Allah and the devotee in terms of a possible mystical oneness with Allah.[16] Although this Sufi representative used a lamp and light analogy cited from the Qur'an to describe Allah's "Light" (Surah 24:35), he refused the same analogical allowance to Tennent.[17] Commenting on how Tennent noted that creation points to the concrete concept of internally differentiated unity, this Sufi fell back into a radical stance on Allah's transcendence: "Therefore, such comparisons are unreliable because Allah is in a different class than anything in the created order."[18] How can this Sufi understand himself to be becoming into a oneness with Allah? Is not "oneness" a creaturely derived concept? Where else will any human find terms but from among other humans using those terms? The Qur'an makes use of human terms (e.g., "jugular vein"). This

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[14] Ibid., 155. Tennent's Muslim dialogue partners represent three major groups of Islam, Sunni, Shi'ite, and Sufism. The term "immanently" refers to the intra-relational reality of God, among the Father, Son, and Spirit.

[15] Ibid., 156 – 157.

[16] Ibid., 158.

[17] Ibid., 161.

[18] Tennent, *Christianity at the Roundtable*, 161. Tennent is equally careful to note God's utter beyondness (that is, real transcendence) but buffers this with the reaffirmation of the legitimacy of creaturely analogies since all creation displays God's glory.

inconsistent use of analogical predication of the Deity by these Muslims is a point Tennent

drives home decisively.[19]

Because Muslims in practice use analogies and understand Allah by the analogies in the

Qur'an, the analogy of creaturely relationships stands to be interrogated in view of a doctrine of

Allah — then contrasted with the doctrine of Trinity. Even the idea of the Sufi achieving

"oneness" is a thought that implies relationship, both humanly and with the divine. For how

could the Sufi know of Allah, His truth, and mystical "oneness" if he had not been told (via

humans passing the religion on), and how can he become one with Allah unless he stands in this

relationship? How does he know what a relationship is apart from a creaturely analogy? What,

too, is the nature of achieiving "oneness with Allah?" This last question centers on the essential

rift between Christians and Muslims. The way the two groups understand "oneness" differs.

Another significant work is Miroslav Volf's *Allah: a Christian Response*, which is

written partly in a dialogical manner.[20] Sheikh al-Jifri presents and defends *Tawḥīd* and

converses with Volf about the contentious matter of Trinity.[21] Volf, a prominent Trinitarian

theologian, explains some of the difficulties of explicating the Trinity. For instance, to speak of

the Trinity biblically requires and the term "begets," but it must be purified of creaturely

conceptions. Volf explains how belief in the Trinity is not a belief in polytheism. Further,

Christians are not trying to soothe their troubled conscience of their supposed tritheism by means

of a belief in Trinitarian monotheism.[22] Volf makes a point by citing Denys Turner that has

concerning ramifications: showing that when thinking of the Deity, numerical values cannot be

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[19] Ibid., 162 – 163, 165.

[20] Miroslav Volf, *Allah: a Christian Response* (HarperCollins e-books, 2011). Kindle.

[21] Ibid., 128 – 129.

[22] Ibid., 133 – 136.

predicated of Him since such numerical values would be understood from creatures. If numerical

conceptions taken from creatures cannot be applied to the Trinity, how then is it intelligible to

speak of "three in one?" It is true that careless application of how three creatures are one to the

Trinity will result in conceiving the Trinity as a tritheistic federation of gods. It is going too far

to claim that applying numerical notions to the Deity is altogether inappropriate; yet applying

numerical values based on how creatures exist to the Deity without removing properties that are

strictly creaturely may distort the knowledge of Him.[23] Volf's main contributions towards human

beings and relationships deal with love, mercy, and the difference in the nature of love between

Islam and Christianity. This work is essential in its comparison of "loves," of what Volf calls

self-love versus the love of the other.[24] His discussion on love brings up the important work by

Ibn Taymiyya (included below). Volf is direct with his analysis of the Deity-human relationship

(or more broadly, the Deity-world relationship). He aims to show that the way God's nature is

understood affects how humans understand themselves in relationship to the Deity. Volf's work

is a fine guide for this thesis, setting the human-Creator relationship squarely in view in a context

of Muslim-Christian dialogue. If the human experience of relationships can be apologetically put

to work to interrogate the nature of the Deity, then there will hopefully be a broadening and

amplification of Volf's thought. What does it mean, after all, for human relationships if love

becomes self-love? This is drastically different than love as love for the other. There are

considerable ethical consequences to this differing view of the Deity. These ethical consequences

speak towards the sufficiency of any worldview, for better or for worse.

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[23] Denys Turner, "The 'Same' God: Is there an 'apophatic' Solution, or, Who's to Know?" (unpublished paper for the consultation on "The Same God," Yale Center for Faith and Culture, September 23 – 24, 2009), 16 – 17, quoted in Volf, *Allah*, 141. Kindle.

[24] Volf, *Allah*, 168 – 169. Kindle.

Historical theologian Timothy George has two works of import: *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad* and *God the Holy Trinity,* both of which aim to show common ground and differences between Islam and Christianity.[25] This latter work asserts that the Old Testament intimates a differentiated oneness in the Deity, what George asserts the church fathers called the *vestigial trinitatas*.[26] George notes that "Christians . . . predicate something essential and irreversible about God that no Muslim can accept: we call him our heavenly Father."[27] This fact provides a relational core, which is true of the Trinity, from which to question how Allah relates. From this observation, George recognizes that God must have a Son because if God is only Father in economic terms relative to His creation, then "fatherhood" is not something essential to Him. He then contrasts this with Arius' heretical view of God as solitary absoluteness: not an unfitting description of Allah.[28]

Of George's conclusions, the first is most significant for the purposes of this work: "God is one but not alone."[29] Allah's "oneness as aloneness" can be established to clearly distance the Trinity's nature from Allah's nature. A fruitful datum used in this work, mimicking George's above conclusion, is that a human is one but not alone, although how this is true of God and humans differs (cf. chap. 2, 3, and 4). What it means to be human includes intersubjectivity. From birth, a human exists in relationship; it might even be said that from conception a human

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[25] Timothy George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad: Understanding the Differences between Christianity and Islam* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002). Kindle; Timothy George, "The Trinity and the Challenge of Islam," in *God the Holy Trinity: Reflections on Christian Faith and Practice*, edited by Timothy George (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006).

[26] Ibid., 116.

[27] Ibid., 122.

[28] Ibid., 122, 125.

[29] George, *Is the Father of Jesus*, 80; George, "Challenge of Islam," in *God the Trinity*, 126.

exists in relationship. No one, after all, has ever been born without a mother.[30] That human

relationships exist and that they are an aspect of what constitute humanity are inescapable facts.[31]

William Montgomery Watt's work, *Islam and Christianity today: a Contribution to Dialogue,* contains a meticulous analysis of Arabic terms employed in Islam and how those relate to Christian terms.[32] Watt is perhaps the first one to use the term "unicity" to describe both the Christian conception of God and the Islamic conception of Allah. He takes the *Shahadah* as indicative of unicity and uses it as a synonym for "oneness."[33] Watt identifies Allah's difference from humans, parenthesizing the term *mukhālafa* to signify this teaching.[34] While giving a favorable nod to the Qur'an's ability to show Allah's immanence, Watt nevertheless concedes that immanence is more "at home in Christianity" than it is in Islam.[35] Watt illuminates the core slave-lord relationship that governs the Qur'anic view of humanity's relation to Allah.[36] If human relationships are structured similarly to Allah's relationship to humanity, then Islam

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[30] Adam would be an exception to this statement although it seems terribly important that Adam has relationship with the Deity from the first moment and Adam had in himself Eve, to be taken out of him later. This blueprint for Adam containing Eve in himself must be by design unless the Deity is to become ignorant.

[31] It should be here noted that this point highlights the deficiency of a modernist anthropology although will be greatly expanded upon in a following footnote. Postmodernity has pointed to the fact that truth is mentally grasped in community although the postmodernist conclusion that truth is therefore constituted by community should, on Christian grounds, robustly resisted. Jonathan Edwards knew that beauty and truth was something to be understood in community because beauty and truth's primordial constitution is inherently intersubjective, i.e., Trinitarianally constituted. For more on this: Edward Farley, *Faith and Beauty* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2001), 47. Although the focus here is on the intersubjectivity of human existence, St. Augustine's inner psychological analogies (Vestigia Trinitatum) for the Trinity highlight the inherently intrasubjective experience of humans as well. St. Augustine, "Book IX: That a Kind of Trinity exists in Man, who is the Image of God," in *De Trinitate*, rev. ed., revised and annotated William Shedd, ed. by Paul Boer, trans. by Arthur Haddan (Veritatis Splendor Publications), bk. 9, chap. 1. Kindle.

[32] Watt, *Islam and Christianity today*.

[33] Ibid., 49. The *Shahdah* states, "There is no deity but God" (*lā ilāha illā llāhu*).

[34] Ibid., 51.

[35] Ibid., 52.

[36] Ibid., 125.

produces (or can produce) a kind of unending theological vision and basis for human tyranny.[37] This occurs because the most primordial relationship that has ever existed is one of qualitative inequality. That is, one of "slave-lord," and this relationship occurred at creation.[38] The Islamic theological vision of Allah as *Rabb* (Lord) over humanity as Allah's *'abd* (slave) holds much potential for investigation in a context of Trinitarian comparison. The practical ramifications are crucial: what is more inflammatory than an unassailable protological-theology of relationships as "slave-lord," that can become paradigmatic for all other relationships?[39]

Kenneth Cragg's influential *The Call of the Minaret* is highly relevant for the purposes here, especially a section on "Interpreting the Christian Doctrine of God." Cragg points out that the Christian doctrine of God is not complex for complexity's sake.[40] Such complexity is not a demerit to Christianity because the criterion of simplicity cannot apply to either the Muslim affirmation that "there is no god but Allah" or the Christian assertion that "God is one." In both, notes Cragg, the only thing that is readily simple is the grammar of a referent (subject) and a predicate.[41] This, coupled with Tennent's point that there are no concrete examples of the

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[37] Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 10. Letham states and likewise calls for the present work: "I find it hard to see how Islam, or, for that matter, any religion based on belief in a unitary god, can possibly account for human personality or explain the diversity in unity of the world. . . . If the Christian faith is to make headway after all these centuries, it must begin at the roots of Islam and the Qur'an's dismissal of Christianity as repugnant to reason due . . . to its teaching on the Trinity."

[38] And what does this produce for how someone "rules" their family who they "pro*created*?"

[39] Watt, *Islam and Christianity*, 126. Watt further notes along similar lines: "In all this it is clear that in the Qur'ān and in early Muslim thinkers no use was made of the conception of human freedom. . . . Any idea of human freedom, however, would necessarily have implied a rebellion against the status of 'abd or slave with regard to God." Others have noted this point as well. Dayton Hartman, "Answering Muslim Objections to the Trinity," Answering Islam, www.answering-islam.org, accessed January 18, 2014; Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: the Crescent in Light of the Cross*, 2nd ed., revised and updated, Grand Rapids: BakerBooks, 2002.

[40] Kenneth Cragg, *The Call of the Minaret* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), 305.

[41] Ibid., 306.

categorical singular in reality, shows the difficulty in understanding the Islamic view.[42] Indeed, Tennent's point is so important that Cragg later makes it himself.[43] The Christian view is obviously considered complex by Muslims, but the lack of categorical singulars makes Islam's doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah look considerably difficult too. Islam and Christianity disagree on the same difficulty of the Deity's unity: "The Christian faith in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not a violation of faith in God's Unity. It is a way of understanding that Unity . . . For the Muslim, faith in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit does violence to the Divine Unity."[44]

Arguing on another level, Cragg adds that God's action and relationships become the clue to God's personality. Cragg infers from how humans experience God to what this experience teaches about God's character and nature. Our inquiry asks how all humans experience their humanity as a complex set of relationships and to infer to the best doctrine of the Deity herein considered, either Islamic or Christian. Cragg makes the further point that the Deity is "by nature revealing," yet this appears wrongheaded.[45] It seems that it would be hard to maintain this on an Islamic view since Allah was not always revealing (or open to another) but only began to reveal when He began to create. Cragg continues to speak of both doctrines of the Deity as the same: "But further, this revelation — if it is of a living God — intends fellowship."[46] Cragg's definition

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[42] Tennent, *Christianity at the Roundtable*, 158. "However, all unity contains plurality. The idea of undifferentiated unity is only a theoretical construct of the mind or a mathematical abstraction. Ultimately, it is no different from nonbeing. In nature we discover that the lower the degree of differentiation something has, the less unity it has, meaning it is divisible or lacks the quality of indivisibility."

[43] Cragg, *Minaret*, 317. "On whatever grounds Muslims feel disposed to disagree with the Christian understanding of God, it cannot validly be on the ground that it is not a doctrine of Unity. For the only sense in which it can be thought not to be so is the one completely inappropriate, namely the mathematical. A bare unity, philosophically understood, is a barren one. We have seen something of this problem in discussing the Qur'ān's relation to God, created or uncreated."

[44] Ibid., 307.

[45] Ibid., 310.

[46] Cragg, *Minaret*, 310. A question should be asked here. Is it enough to "intend fellowship" to truly experience or have life? Or does having the fellowship constitute "living?" Intuitively — which likewise is, then,

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of "living" includes the intention of fellowship. A definition of this type is devastating for the Islamic doctrine of Allah. If "intending fellowship" constitutes "life," then how could Allah said to be "alive" prior to the act of creating since there would be no "other" with whom to commune?[47] Cragg is not unaware of such difficulties arising from a doctrine of *Tawḥīd*: "For creation, to be meaningful as a loving transaction, it must originate in a purpose that is already love within itself. We cannot say that "God is Love" and also say that "God is solitary" or, in this solitary sense, that "God is One." Entire transcendence is in the end a blank agnosticism."[48]

The now famous work of Ibn Taymiyya cannot be overlooked in its guidance addressing historic objections to Christianity.[49] He is a controversial figure in how he used anthropomorphic language, but his great influence on the development of Islamic thought is undeniable. His section "*Ittihad*: Union of God with a Creature" addresses matters of revelation, the hypostatic union, creation as necessity, the importance of the check of reason, the philosophical terms applied to non-existence, pantheism, and the nature of transcendence, among others.[50] Only a

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persuasive — it is transparently obvious that it is the participation in the fellowship that is living, not intending to participate in it. If ever someone had a child who was excluded from a friend-group that child intending to be in, the same one knows that the child has loss something in this exclusion. The child is depraved of something "giving life," that is, joining in that fellowship of that friend-group. Or if someone ever had a child who had no friends or had a hard time making friends, it is plain that the liveliness of that child is confounded to one degree or another.

[47] Cragg's use of the word "life" is specified, it seems, to higher life forms. There are clear examples of "life" that lack "intending fellowship," i.e., amoeba. The question of what constitutes "life" for a human, though, is quite different than asking what constitutes "life" for an amoeba. It is not uncommon for all the factors entailed in human experience to be designated by anthropologists as one's "life-world." Relating to others, things, and creatures is part of every human's "life-world." The human who is banished or exiled alone may, at first glance, appear to be a counterexample against the supposition that every human's life-world entails "relating to others." Such an objection, however, would only stand from a very specific conception of what entails "relating." Certainly, memory and thinking about others, things, and creatures, could be argued to be forms of relating. In this sense, even to be exiled alone is not necessarily be alone. Then, there is the matter of illness, that is, what is actually improper or contrary to what it means to be human: what encourages our humanity and what discourages us from being uniquely human. Exile and banishment are forms of punishments for a reason: because there is something contrary to being human, something unpleasant, about the punishments.

[48] Ibid., 317.

[49] Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab Al Sahih Li-Man Baddal Din Al-Masih* [*A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*] ed. and trans. Thomas Michel S. J. (Delmar NY: Caravan Books, 1984).

[50] Ibid., 312 – 325.

few of these are directly pertinent to the present proposal. One example shows Ibn Taymīyya's

form of argument against the Trinity. Ibn Taymiyya states, "demanding that the creator has a

need for His creature — which is clear blasphemy — is clearly forbidden by sound reason.

However, this is a necessary conclusion for Christians . . . . In a union each of the two uniting

elements must have the other, and is thus in need of the other, just as they represent it in their

analysis of the soul with the body . . . ."[51] He is speaking of what appears to be the hypostatic

union. His reasoning is sound enough regarding the necessity of the two uniting elements since,

without both, there would no longer be a union. Saying that the union necessitates the uniting

elements and their mutual dependence on one another to retain that union does not address

whether or not the initial decision to unite was necessitated.[52] Furthermore, Ibn Taymīyya's use

of necessartarian logic impugns the real possibility of a decision. Decisions, especially by the

Deity, are free, not necessitated.[53] Just as a free woman is not required to marry a man, so the

Creator is not required to unite to the creature. Like a woman can freely decide to marry, unites

to her husband, and the two constitute a union, both necessary for the union, so does the Creator,

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[51] Ibid., 314.

[52] It should be noted that the two uniting elements in the hypostatic union are not of two symmetrical (or equal) natures but is an asymmetrical union, the greater divine nature (uncreated) uniting to the lesser (and created) human nature.

[53] At least this holds in this case. There are the questions of whether God would make a square a circle or call good what is evil. Voluntarianism is not a helpful way to handle these but neither is turning to "necessities" that somehow impose on God. Another way to handle the rational or moral dilemma is to claim that ration and morality depend on God's nature without God controlling the nature of ration or morality by merely "willing it" (voluntarianism). In this way, the freedom of God is maintained because God acts freely from who/what He is without making ration or morality arbitrary by virtue of God just willing it. It could be objected that God's nature is controlling God, but such an objection would remove God's nature from the Lordly Subject God is and turn God's nature into an "objective necessity" that somehow imposes on God. An objection of this sort would only stand if God were mutilated, i.e., God's nature could be "cut" from God so that it were seen as some kind of external imposition.

in Jesus, unite the divine nature to humanity, both necessary for the union that is the theanthropic one, Jesus.[54]

Two chapters in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, edited and contributed-to by Kevin Vanhoozer, offer insight into God's identity and the question of how Trinitarian is the Sufi tradition of Islam.[55] Vanhoozer draws on Paul Ricoeur's work on narrative identity. From this, two helpful constructs for forming "narrative identities" are discussed: an *idem*-identity and an *ipse*-identity. The Latin terms convey what they represent, a way of understanding identity in terms of its sameness (*idem*) or in terms of the identity's consistency with its word (*ipse*). Ricoeur's main point, as described by Vanhoozer, is that "identities" in narratives are constituted on the basis of their speech (i.e., *ipse*-identity) and then consistency to that speech.[56] *Ipse dixit* means "He Himself said" or "He said the very thing" (*Dixit ipsum*). The very things said by a narrative character are part of this character's identity formation. Whether or not the character will uphold what he utters creates the identity of the character; this is how *ipse*-identity is formed. *Idem*-identity is formed by maintenance of "sameness" across a span of time. *Idem*-identity faces the trouble of how communion can ever occur with new identities not on the scene formerly. *Ipse*-identity makes room for communion by the faithfulness or unfaithfulness to one's word, but may well jeopardize the "sameness" *idem*-identity does so well to protect. These points

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[54] Although the character of God seems to preclude the possibility of the dissolution of the divine nature's union to humanity this is not to say that God is not free to dissolve it. Because God would not does not, at least *prima facie*, entail that God could not. The continued gratuity of redemption might rest upon the fact that God could indeed dissolve the union if He saw fit. There is a dangerous amphiboly suggested if the nature of God or the will of God is made more basic and so "controls" or "necessitates" God to be of a certain nature or act in a certain way. God's love and freedom perichoretically entail the other, and so coextensively exist together, making all such bifurcations in the nature/will of God fictive theological pitfalls.

[55] Kevin Vanhoozer, ed., *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age: Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997). Roland Poupin authors "Is There a Trinitarian Experience in Sufism" and Kevin Vanhoozer writes on "Does the Trinity Belong to a Theology of Religions? On Angling in the Rubicon and the "Identity" of God."

[56] Vanhoozer, "Does the Trinity Belong to a Theology of Religions? in *Trinity in Pluralistic Age*, 65.

on identity might serve well when appropriated to this context of considering Allah vis-à-vis Trinity. Specifically, how does the Islamic doctrine of Allah handle *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity? How does the Christian doctrine of the Trinity handle them? Does *ipse*-identity imply a betrayal of the Deity's immutability? Finally, does *idem*-identity destroy all hopes of communing with the Deity?

Roland Poupin charitably presents a case for Sufism's similarity to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. He does this by demonstrating three manners of Allah's love: lover, beloved, and love — would St. Augustine be pleased?[57] The problem is that this triad of love is unipersonal. Further, the triad of love of Allah is accomplishable by making humans merely a fictive means to carry out Allah's love for Himself.[58] This pushes all reality towards being understood as illusory or only an emanation of Allah and His self-love. Thus, the quality of Allah's "love" differs significantly from Trinitarian formulation.[59]

In his endeavor to show Sufism's logical consistency, Poupin's presentation is terribly fruitful — a strange outcome for a strand of Islam that emphasizes mysticism with its tendency to obfuscate. The history of Hallāj and the work of Al-Ghazālī both testify to the logic of Sufism: any proclamation of Allah's *Tawḥīd* introduces an intractable dualism. The Muslim who proclaims *Tawḥīd* is actually announcing an abstract *Tawḥīd* (unicity) because such an

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[57] Poupin, "Is There a Trinitarian Experience in Sufism" in *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 76. Summarily, Poupin states, ". . . but in a God who is Love-Lover-Beloved, loving himself in the eyes of the loving creature for the object of his love . . . ." Poupin likewise cites Ibn 'Arabi (on pg. 81): ". . . Who manifests himself to each beloved and to the eyes of each lover. There is thus only one lover in universal existence (and it is God) so that the entire world is lover and beloved." Ibn 'Arabi, *Traité de l'amour*, trans. M. Gloton, coll. "Spiritualités vivantes" (Paris: Albin Michel, 1986), 59. Further, Poupin adds, "God alone subsists as being himself love, lover, and beloved (pg. 81)," speaking of Allah understood in terms of Sufism.

[58] Ibid., 76 "The final purpose is to join in the act of God by which he unifies himself in his creatures; otherwise it would be only a definitive failure of the unification. So there is for the mystic no true *Tawḥīd*, no true unification of God, but in a God who is Love-Lover-Beloved, loving himself in the eyes of the loving creature for the object of his love . . . ."

[59] Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response*, 170. Kindle.

announcement by a human being "other" than Allah denies the absolute "oneness" (*Tawḥīd*) of Allah. In concrete reality, the human being is "another" that can be offset against Allah. This bifurcates reality into two (at least): Allah and the Muslim who praises Allah. Thus, the intractable dualism is erected. In short, the proclamation of *Tawḥīd* is vacuous because it concretely denies what it abstractly aims to affirm. This formulation assumes that the Creator-creation relationship is inherently monist: emanational or illusory. That the dualism is understood as intractable is based on a refusal to conceive creation as genuinely contingent and other.[60] The way to overcome this dualism and the doctrine of creation as contingent is to affirm that the creation/creatures are Allah. All creatures and all of creation are assimilated into Allah, understood as "emanations" or "illusions" while the creatures/creation yet live.[61] For a human person to claim this while living is considered the grave sin of *Tashbīh*.[62] *Tashbīh* dictates that God is not to be assimilated to man. Although *Tashbīh* means the heretical introduction of pantheism and/or idolatry of the creature, the evil of *ta'tīl* (absolute apophaticism) understood in the abstract claim of *Tawḥīd* more than subtly commends agnosticism.[63] All creation viewed as

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[60] Poupin, "Is There a Trinitarian Experience in Sufism" in *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 76, 81. Poupin articulates well: "There is no true proclamation of the unicity of God but in this blasphemy and its punishment, in this punishment-blasphemy. [He is talking about having to affirm the blasphemy that the creature is wholly united and assimilated in Allah, with no difference] Without it, the unification, the proclamation of the divine unicity, is only the abstract discourse of a creature who, while doing its abstract proclamation, is putting itself unconsciously as the other aspect of a duality persisting in front of God — while it is trying to define as one this undefinable one" (76).

[61] More on "assimilation" is addressed later. The word also means "annihilation," and it implies absorption.

[62] Ibid., 79. "The theology of Ibn Dawûd Ispahan (909), a great jurist and mystic, who sent a first *fatwâ* against Hallâj some years before, reveals the sin his contemporaries accused him of having committed: the *tashbîh*, the assimilation of God to man, a sin against *Tahwîd*, the proclamation of the unicity of God."

[63] Ibid., 80. "For if the assimilation — the *tashbîh* (with its risks of pantheism, and even idolatrous tendencies) — is avoided, it is but for a purely abstract profession of the divine unicity — the *ta'tîl*. And this is what Hallaj or Ahmad Ghazāli refused." Apophaticism is defining the Deity by what He is not. If the affirmation of *Tawḥīd* is only abstract, then *Tawḥīd* is not represented, or does not occur, in concrete reality. According to the Sufism Poupin is unpacking, such a situation turns *Tawḥīd* into something fanciful that is not experienced by humans. Instead, humans experience *Tawḥīd*'s opposite, namely, that humans are concrete others, who can, as contingent others, profess *Tawḥīd*. Therefore, the only true proclamation of *Tawḥīd* on this logic is the claim that all is Allah. If all is Allah, including all human persons, then professing *Tawḥīd* is a concrete occurrence, rather than abstract, of the oneness of all reality as Allah.

Allah commends one evil (*Tashbīh*) while taking creation as contingent (= cosmological dualism) conjures another, namely, the denial of *Tawḥīd*, which could well lead to agnosticism.[64] By a human being's announcement of *Tawḥīd* as "other," cosmological dualism is achieved, which is a violation of *Tawḥīd* according to the logic of Sufism. Extending Poupin's thought a bit, a merely abstract claim of *Tawḥīd* is seen, on the basis of a monist understanding of so-called creation, as self-referentially defeating. So in a strange twist of fate, it is the danger of *ta'ṭīl* by means of a vacuous abstract assertion of *Tawḥīd* that comes across as *more* mystical than Hallāj's claim and Ghazālī's logical point that "otherness" violates *Tawḥīd*.

Christian Krokus', "Divine Embodiment in Christian-Muslim Perspective," highlights the problem that Islam has with its claim that the Qur'an is divine Speech.[65] Krokus supplements a point Volf makes in his work: "all individuality, all multiplicity is then ultimately an illusion."[66] All reality is *Tawḥīdic* ("one"), united in Allah so much so that the only reality is Allah himself. The importance of this article comes from its articulation of the Deity-creation relationship in both Islam and Christianity, with a special focus on the human participation in divine immanence proper to each religion.

Jonathan Martin Ciraulo has recently written "The One and the Many: Peter and Peters," which offers insights on human identity, the Trinity's relationship to human identity, Christ and identity, and ecclesiology.[67] Identity formation of a "self" occurs in a context of intersubjectivity.

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[64] This last clause, "which could well lead to agnosticism," follows from the fact that *Tawḥīd* is implied in both the *Shahadah* and Surach 112. Therefore, the inability to affirm *Tawḥīd* is to lose the core and foundation of Islam.

[65] Christian S. Krokus, "Divine Embodiment in Christian-Muslim Perspective," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 22, no. 2 (January 1, 2012): 158–169.

[66] Ibid., 165; Volf, *Allah*, 169. Kindle.

[67] Jonathan Martin Ciraulo, "The One and the Many: Peter and Peters," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 45–57.

Especially in the case of Christ, there is a consistent plurality, either from above (his unity among the Persons of the Trinity) or from below (his unity with those He redeems: church). The Trinity overcomes the dualism of the One and the Many — more on this later. Multiplicity of church leadership, therefore, can be fashioned into co-equal church authorities, attainable when undergirded by a doctrine of the Trinity. Ciraulo wants to effect a reunion between Eastern (Greek Orthodox) and Western (Roman Catholic) churches based on a model of church fashioned after the Trinity.[68] In this way, there need not be only one group (Orthodox or Catholic) who can allege authority for its church, and both can claim co-equal authority and status as true successors of the apostles.[69] The doctrine of the Trinity's unique ability to undercut "either-or" categories while maintaining a fundamental unity stands out in this article without leading to pantheism. It is the fundamental equality of the Persons of the Trinity that makes possible this vision of equal authority of both the Catholic and Orthodox churches. Furthermore, Ciraulo's development of a "corporate personality" for both Christ and for the church, following John Zizioulas' lead, suggests that a human person, inside or outside of the church, is constituted together with a community, in all cases.[70]

In "*Tawḥīd* and *Homooúsios*: Narrowing the Gaps between Muslim and Christian Understanding of God's divine Oneness," Evan Longhurst highlights how "unity" in both Islam and Christianity are more similar than different.[71] Although the title, "Tawḥīd and Homooúisos,"

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[68] Ibid., 45.

[69] Ibid., 56 – 67.

[70] Ciraulo, "The One and the Many: Peter and Peters," 46 – 48; John F. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*, CONTEMPORARY GREEK THEOLOGIANS 4 (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 157; Paul Mcpartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Fairfax, VA: Eastern Christian Publications, 2006), 185.

[71] Christopher Evan Longhurst, "Tawḥīd and Homooúsios: Narrowing the Gaps Between Muslim and Christian Understanding of God's Divine Oneness," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 255–258

seems particularly promising for comparing Islam's and Christianity's dotrine of the Deity, it is more a simple cursory comparison for showing how both faiths understand divine essence (or nature) to be one. The Christian doctrine concerning the nature of God and the Islamic doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah are shown to be largely the same, both intending to emphasize and protect the divine unity. Longhurst does not comment on the "multiplicity" already implied in the term *homo-oúsios* (*homo* = same) — asking "the same to whom" infers multiplicity. Such plurality in terms of the Trinity is never apart from unity, but the matter of the multiplicity must be broached to avoid disproportionally emphasizing the unity. Longhurst's goal in his article is to find the common ground between the two religions, which is laudable. This common ground, however, will not remain once the Father, Son, and Spirit enter the conversation.

In "Accommodating Trinity: A Brief Note on Ibn 'Arabī's Views" Qaiser Shahzad makes Ibn 'Arabī's comprehension of the Creator-creation relationship clearer.[72] The world is all an emanation of Allah. Anywhere one looks, Allah is there. Humanity is a special case of Allah's divine manifestation because humans are the names of Allah manifested.[73] Ibn 'Arabī accommodates the doctrine of Trinity to facilitate a rigorous unity (*Tawḥīd*) despite apparent creaturely multiplicity: perhaps creatures are modes of Allah. Ibn 'Arabī's exegesis of Surah 5:73 exposes that the Qur'an does not condemn those who say "God is the third of three" as polytheists (*mushrikūn*) but as unbelievers (*kāfirūn*). Shahzad cites Arabī's approval of the Trinity as another kind of *Tawḥīd*, a "oneness of composition."[74] This, however, is a confused understanding of the Trinity.

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[72] Qaiser Shahzad, "Accomodating Trinity: a Brief Note on Ibn 'Arabī's Views," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 1 (December 1, 2013): 114–120.

[73] Ibid., 115.

[74] Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt* (Beirut: Dar Sadir, n.d.), III:173.

Survey Conclusion

What comes clearly to the fore is the absence of literature that deals directly with

Tawḥīdic Allah vis-à-vis Trinity in view of human relationships. No literature attempts an

abductive apologetic (and polemic) from human relationships, and their inescapability, to the

Trinity as the best explanation of this evidence over *Tawḥīdic* Allah. There is certainly much

literature on Trinity, some on *Tawḥīd*, and some for the Trinity's impact on anthropology —

more on specifying "anthropology" as used in this work follows below.[75] There is an obvious

need for potentially uniting these domains of knowledge to see if such can be constructively

fruitful for elucidating distinctives proper to the Trinity vis-à-vis Allah. Moreover, once properly

integrated, the path stands open to possibly provide new insights into the way anthropology

might well serve the apologetic task of Christianity (via Trinity), the polemical discussion with

Islam, and comparative religion.

Fields of Direct Relevance

This dissertation has several dimensions of relevancy for the philosophy of religion,

theology, apologetics, and religious polemics. The broad questions of religion are ones about the

nature of the "ultimate" and about the ultimate nature of reality. In one breath, Islam and

Christianity affirm the "ultimate" to be a monotheistic Deity, omnipotent, omniscient,

omnipresent, glorious, and worthy. In another breath, both religious faiths concurrently deny

that the "ultimate" is some impersonal force, chi, or an amorphous cosmic power. Denied too are

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[75] Dan and Kate Montgomery, *Compass Psychotheology: where Psychology and Theology really meet* (Albuquerque, NM: Compass Works, 2006); Marc Cardinal Ouellet, *Divine Likeness: Toward a Trinitarian Anthropology of the Family*, trans. Philip Milligan and Linda Cicone (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006); Robert Sokolowski, *Christian Faith & Human Understanding: Studies on the Eucharist, Trinity, and the Human Person* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2006); Enrique Cambon, *Trinity: Model of Society*, ed. Bill Hartnett (New City Press, 2014); Aristotle Papanikolaou, *Being with God: Trinity, Apophaticism, and Divine-Human Communion* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006); and Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (Wipf and Stock, 2005).

all articulations of atheism, agnosticism, or neo-pagan self-deification. The Deity is thought to superintend reality by both, with the ultimate religious aim being the worship and glorification of this Deity.[76] This issue is well suited to the current domains of knowledge — i.e., Christian studies, Islamic studies, apologetics proper to each, semiotic matters pertaining to the Deity, and anthropology. Not a few have sought to compare these two religions, but few have compared the theological convergences and divergences between the two religions that arise from an analysis of *Tawḥīdic* Allah vis-à-vis Trinity. It is this comparison that will enable us to describe and specify more effectivetly the contours of each respective religion, advancing the dialogue between these two Abrahamic traditions.

If, in the first place, the relevancy of this dissertation for religion presented Christianity and Islam as close akin, similar, and common to one another like two cords of a tight-knit knot, then an analysis of theology proper to each religion on the matter of the doctrine of the Deity unbinds or loosens this knot. The unique elements of both religions occur in the human activity of theologizing about the Deity, so they demand careful terminology to properly capture the specific exclusivity of each religion. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is partly the doctrine of the Deity that is under analysis, which does not remain thoroughout the generalized "doctrine of the Deity." This phrase under the rigor of theology proper to each religion thereby becomes the "doctrine of Allah" for Islam and the "doctrine of God" or the "doctrine of Trinity" for Christianity.

Within the larger question of creation's relationship to the Deity is the more limited question of humanity's relationship to the Deity. It is evident that human relationships exist and

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[76] Muhmoud M. Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History* (Oneworld Publications, 2013), chap. 2, sec. 3. Kindle. He states, "The ultimate end of human existence is to worship God in righteousness, gratitude, and obedience."

that they are inescapable. These observations function as a basis for interrogating the doctrine of

the Deity in Islam and Christianity to see which theological formulation offers a better

explanation of this evidence. Further, such an interrogation must articulate an Islamic doctrine of

Allah in order to emphasize Allah's dissimilarity to human beings, whereas the Christian

doctirne of God highlights similarity.[77] A tertiary question occurs at this point: how is the Islamic

doctrine of creation configured compared to the Christian doctrine of creation? Is creation

illusory, emanational, or contingent? How this question is answered will figure in what to make

of human relationships. It is not a *psychē*-ic (psycheic hereafter, as adjective) anthropology that

is illuminated in this dissertation. Rather, a *koinōnia*-ic (koinoniac hereafter, as adjective)

anthropology is in view, one that demonstrates the "koinoniac" essence of human reality and the

way this koinoniac reality is inescapable.[78] To state that human reality is koinoniac is the same as

stating that human reality is intersubjective. The contours of each religion's doctrine of the Deity

commend a distinguishable anthropology.

    The fact of human relationships and their inescapability has not been developed in a

context of distinct articulation of a doctrine of Allah vis-à-vis the doctrine of Trinity along with

the consequential and manifest differences between them. In order to explain how these two

religions account differently for human relationships and their inescapability, three categories are

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[77] Such a statement must be understood within the context and purpose of this work. Compared to the Islamic doctrine of Allah, the Christian doctrine of God highlights the similarity between humans and God. This is because God chose humanity as His analogy (Gen. 1:26 – 28, 2:4). For Christianity, there is similarity between God and humans and dissimilarity, with individual Christian traditions paying attention to one or the other with more or less neglect of to the one payed less attention.

[78] Rather than using "societal anthropology" or "communal anthropology," the above term, koinoniac, has been coined to avoid unwanted conjuring of connotations associated with these terms from the secular arts. This term, from the Greek κοινωνια, denotes communion, association, partnership, fellowship, or even a common gift. *Psychē* (from the Greek, ψυχη, meaning "soul" or "life") intimates an analysis of the inward workings of a human. And, again, this term has been coined to avoid connotations from secular psychology seeping in or even the Cartesian notion of "self" as isolated or self-identification as a system unto itself. Although an analysis of this Psycheic anthropology is useful, as St. Augustine has shown (*De Trinitate*, bk. 9 – 12), this is not at the crux of the inquiry here.

highlighted: relatedness, distinctness, and oneness. These matters will then be set against the backdrop of the doctrine of Allah and the doctrine of the Trinity to thereby observe the depth of explanation and how similar or dissimilar the Deity must be reckoned in view of this evidence.

Reflecting carefully on the nature of human relationships and their inescapability in view of Christianity and Islam gives place to the inquiry of whether such human evidence functions as a means towards understanding the Deity or not. Some of the authors previously surveryed have pointed to the difficulty that Islam's doctrine of Allah has in accounting for human relationships while maintaining that Christianity's doctrine of Trinity offers grounding for them. This study endeavors to advance this insight, developing and thereby rigorously demonstrating that this observation *in nuce* also gives a penetrating sapience on a grander scale when unpacked, explained, and investigated. The use of human relationships and their inescapability as an abductive apologetic results from a coalescence of renewed interest in the Trinity in connection with the labors of Christian apologists towards Islam. This convergence has enriched the "soil" for the current advances and the treating of these divergent fields of knowledge together. This inquiry also continues, albeit only a tertiary resultant, the assault on a warped notion of anthropology and personality. In sum, this present work aims to provide another tool for Christian apologetics, *the abductive argument from human relationships and their inescapability*. It is likewise a polemic against the Islamic view of the Deity's radical oneness. The question of what it means to be a human being (anthropology) according to each religion is secondarily illuminated along the way. This includes a special emphasis on the intersubjectivity of human existence that observers how "relationality" constitutes part of the human nature of each human being (= inescapable). Said differently in a way useful for later, "human relationality" constitutes an aspect of the "ontology" of a human being. Human relating, or human intersubjectivity, can

be accurately retitled "human-onto-relations." This is because the shear reality of all human existence occurs in a context of human relationships that influences who or what a human being is and becomes. Thus, such relating is connected to human ontology, or human nature, because this relating *contributes* to the constitution of each human being. No human being is who he is apart from his relationships.[79]

Some impetuses of the current study came from concern in matters of philosophy of religion, political theory, social matters, anthropology, and a personal desire to mine and fruifully use the great riches of Christian Trinitarian theology. Alvin Plantinga has called for Christian philosophers — and so by extension to theologians as well — to present ideas that are radically qualified by Christianity's specificities (here, this would be appropriating God as Trinity) rather than settling to discourse by what is fashionably approved by non-Christian philosophers.[80] Timothy George lobbies for the same, but he focused on which theism is true, noting that bare monotheism is far from enriched with the biblical portrayal of YAHWEH.[81] Robert Letham named the need for a study such as the one at hand a decade ago.[82] Thomas Torrance effectively noted the analogy between humanity and their relationships to that of God the Trinity

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[79] This term, "onto-relations," will later be used of the Trinity; it is very important to recognize that "onto-relations" used of the Trinity does not mean same thing as "onto-relations" when applied to human beings: hence, "human-onto-relations."

[80] Alvin Plantinga, "Advice to Christian Philosophers*," Faith and Philosophy: Journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers* 1, no. 3 (October, 1984): 253 – 271. Although Plantinga's advice only applies partially to this current project, the thrust of his point — to be unabashed at using the riches, depth, and specifics of Christianity's worldview — hits home.

[81] Timothy George, "The Trinity and the Challenge of Islam," in *God the Holy Trinity*, 127.

[82] Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 10. "I find it hard to see how Islam, or, for that matter, any religion based on belief in a unitary god, can possibly account for human personality or explain the diversity in unity of the world. . . . If the Christian faith is to make headway after all these centuries, it must begin at the roots of Islam and the Qur'an's dismissal of Christianity as repugnant to reason due . . . to its teaching on the Trinity."

and the intra-relationships He is.[83] Karl Rahner pointed out that it is a real question of proper

theology whether to understand God as a self-same identity without intrinsic mediation. This he

says in a context of how "an "apologetics" of the "immanent" Trinity should not start from the

false assumption that a lifeless self-identity without any mediation is the most perfect way of

being of the absolute existent."[84] S. M. Zwemer remarked, just over a century ago, that little

analysis has been put towards the Muslim idea of the Deity.[85] There still is a relatively small

amount of literature of paratactic-like comparison regulated by Islam's and Christianity's

doctrine of the Deity. Miroslav Volf explains the import of the Trinity for Christians, which is

likewise confirmed by Scott Horrell: ". . . that the triune God stands at the beginning and at the

end of the Christian pilgrimage and, therefore, at the center of Christian faith."[86] Horrell likewise

confirms that truths for informing someone about self and interpersonal relations are readily

available in consideration of social models of the Trinity.[87] Fred Sanders points to the complete

Trinitarian immersion that Christians participate in by just existing.[88] Donald Fairbairn considers

the essential contestation over the "oneness" of the Deity to be the major tension among the

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[83] Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being Three Persons* (New York: T & T Clark, 1996), 103. "This onto-relational concept of 'person' generated through the doctrines of Christ and the Holy Trinity, is one that is also applicable to inter-human relations, but in a created way reflecting the uncreated way in which it applies to the Trinitarian relations in God."

[84] Karl Rahner, *The Trinity,* with an introduction, index, and glossary by Catherine Mowry Lacugna, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 2003), 102 – 103.

[85] S. M. Zwemer, *Arabia: Studies in the Geography, People and Politics of the Peninsula, with an Account of Islam and Mission-Work* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1900), 171.

[86] Miroslav Volf, "Being as God Is: Trinity and Generosity," in *God's Life in Trinity*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 3; Scott Horrell, "Chapter 2 The Eternal Son of God in the Social Trinity," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, Eds. Fred Sanders and Klause Issler (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2007). 46.

[87] Ibid., 76.

[88] Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: how the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 36.

Abrahamic traditions (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity).[89] A Deity who has no intra-relationships

falls short in offering anything relationally substantial to humans in salvation.[90] Salvific matters

are at stake since, as George opines, "For in Islam revelation is, essentially . . . , what Allah's

project is about, in this world and in our history. . . . What is missing here is a concept of

redemption. God is not only a revealer; God is a redeemer as well. The Trinitarian understanding

of God tells us that this God is sufficiently sovereign to come as well as to send."[91] James White

recently presented the need to accurately unfold *Tawḥīd* and Trinity for the sake of meaningful

dialogue.[92] Finally, Brannon Wheeler, too, has voiced that not enough material exists for

teaching Islam.[93]

Criteria

This dissertation will assume that it is empirically obvious that human interrelationships

exist (even from birth no one is alone!) and that they are inescapably part of what constitutes

human existence. On the first assumption, that human relationships exist is utterly undeniable on

realism: how can the reader read this if they are not related to the author? The reality of human

relationships, moreover, has three definite coutours. To be human is to be in oneness with others,

be distinct from others, and be related to others. This is the evidence from which the best

explanation is inferred. In this sense, the launch of this inquiry is empirical, but perhaps even

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[89] Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: an Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), chap. 3, sec. 1. Kindle.

[90] Ibid., chap. 3, sec. 3. Kindle.

[91] George, "The Trinity and the Challenge of Islam," *God the Holy Trinity*, 127.

[92] James R. White, *What Every Christian needs to know about the Qur'an* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2013), chap. 3, sec. 2. Kindle.

[93] Brannon Wheeler, "What can't be left out: the Essentials of Teaching Islam as a Religion," in *Teaching Islam*, ed. Brannon Wheeler, AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION TEACHING RELIGIOUS STUDIES SERIES, ed. Susan Henking (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

surer than sense data outside of humans (if one's epistemology leans Kantian). To be in oneness

with others, to be distinct from others, and to be related to others, are features of human

relationality that are immanent to and inescapable for each and every human.[94] Two criteria will

be used to arbitrate between a Trinitarian view of God and a *Tawḥīdic* view of Allah. These

criteria will be used to judge whether *Tawḥīdic* Allah or the Triune God handles the existence

and inescapability of human relationships better. Specifically, the criteria will adjudicate on how

well the Christian doctrine of the Trinity or the Islamic doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah handles the

mere existence of human relationships and the scope of the evidence. The first criterion is

explanatory depth: how deep does this doctrine of the Deity (Trinity or Monad) account for the

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[94] The hope of using these three contours is to find a sure and conmmon footing for dialogue with Muslims. Although it is claimed above that the three contours are immanent to each person, this is not to suggest an abstract isolating of oneness, distinctness, or relatedness. These three notions as experienced by a human being cannot be isolated because this is not the way or manner of human existing; but the isolation of the concepts can be done for the purpose of analysis. The strength of using these data is in their intuitive accessibility. The challenge of using them, however, is the nature of the conversation with Islam. Thus, it might be expected that a highly nuanced conception of "oneness" would be offered based on the great resources of Western studies, whether from phenomenology, theology, metaphysics, psychology, or anthropology. Such an advancement of the argument would readily give unwarranted favor to Christianity because it has been studied together for many long centuries with these other Western disciplines (if not helping to give rise to some as well). Akbar Ahmed complains of this very thing in the source listed below (pg. 2). Because of this, overly specialized concepts from Western disciplines are left to the side. Nevertheless, since so much of this dissertation turns on the idea of "oneness," below are sources that justify the notion of "oneness" used in this dissertation from both Western and Islamic origins. Biological oneness is uncontroversial; it is cognitive oneness that these sources are designed to support. Merryl Wyn Davies, *Knowing One Another: Shaping an Islamic Anthropology*, ISLAMIC FUTURES AND POLICY STUDIES (New York: Mansell Publishing, 1988), 6, 174; Surah 49:13; Erich Kolig, *Conversative Islam: A Cultural Anthropology* (Blue Ridge Summit, PA: Lexington Books, 2012), 23 – 24; Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 37 and 65; Wolfhart Pannenberg, *What is a Man? Contemporary Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Duane A. Priebe (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 82; Akbar S. Ahmed, "Defining Islamic Anthropology," *Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britian and Ireland* 65 (Dec., 1984), 2 – 3; Muhammad Ali, *Islam: the Religion of Humanity* (Woking: Unwin Bros., 1910), 10 – 12; Osman Bakar, "Humanity and Diversity," in *Humanity, Texts and Contexts: Christian and Mulsim Perspectives*, eds. Michael Ipgrave and David Marshall (Washington D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2011), 120 – 123; Alessandro Duranti, "Husserl, Intersubjectivity, and Anthropology," *Anthropological Theory* 10 (2010), 16. This list suffices but it coud go well on. The focus on the idea of oneness, whether of biological or cognitive, actually favors an Islamic viewpoint because all things trace back to or orient themselves to *Tawḥīd*, Allah's oneness. The ideas, developed by Husserl long ago as Duranti reports, of exchangeability between "self and other" in addition to a world that can only be experienced as a "co-world" similarly point to and justify the stance here on biological and cognitive oneness. That this notion of cognitive oneness is an intuition available to every person is a piece of evidence well documented across Western and Eastern spheres of thought. Cognitive oneness, however it is ontological grounded, is about mutual understanding, a syncing of thought so as to achieve more or less mimesis and identicality of thought. It could get much more complex, but that would only complicate the discussion and detract from the purpose of this dissertation.

existence of human relationships?[95] Are there sufficient resources in a respective doctrine of the Deity to explain and ground the existence of human relationships? How much of the evidence is explained with ease, and how much ambiguity is cleared away by a respective doctrine of the Deity? These questions mark the explanatory depth a doctrine of the Deity goes in explaining human relationships and their inescapability. Second is explanatory scope: How wide is the scope of a doctrine of the Deity in accounting for the evidence of the existence of human relationships, their inescapability, and their contours of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness? A doctrine of the Deity that can more broadly account for the scope of the evidence is superior in its explanatory scope.

A theory with less explanatory scope may be said to possess more "*ad-hoc*-ness." The theories to be tested in this inquiry are Islam's view of Allah in contradistinction to Christianity's view of the Trinity. The more *ad hoc* something is, the less compelling it is in view of its limited explanatory scope. The more *ad hoc* a theory is means that it can only explain this or that datum, but is less and less effective in accounting for all data. This sense relies on the denotation of the Latin "*hoc*" as neuter rather than masculine ("towards the data"). There is the second and more traditional way the phrase *ad hoc* is used in investigation as well. The second denotation for *ad hoc* is when someone relies on nonevidenced assumptions in her hypothesizing in order to make her theory appear more appealing. In this case, certain assumptions are taken for granted by the theorizer; in other words, a theory may appear to work-well based on nonevidenced assumptions that belong to this certain person (*ad hoc* or *ad hac*; "to this man" or "to this woman"). It is critical to vet oneself and those he discoures with because often these *ad hoc* elements are undergirding biases or unwarranted presuppositions.

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[95] Explanatory depth is a synonym for explanatory power.

Method

This argument will be made in a five-step manner with corresponding chapters. The current introduction unpacks the need, rationale, criteria, and current state of literature on the related topic. Chapter two addresses five prolegomena topics: analogical predication, the respective meanings of *Hypostasis* (ὑπόστασις) and *ousia* (οὐσία), the relationship between *Hypostasis* and *ousia*, anthropology, society and the Deity, the "ninety-nine beautiful names of Allah," and providing a definition of *Tawḥīd*.[96] *Hypostasis* and *ousia* tend to be understood as strict categories but the doctrine of *perichōrēsis* (Latin: *circumincessio*) helps to explain the relation between them and suggests a fluidity between person and nature.[97] The third chapter will present *Tawḥīd* and Allah's oneness, distinctness, and relatedness. Chapter four presents the Trinity, focusing on oneness, distinctness, and relatedness therein. Chapter five compares the Islamic doctrine of Allah with the Christian doctrine of Trinity in view of the evidence of human relationships: which doctrine better accounts for human relationships, their inescapability, and their contours of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness? Following this conclusion, trajectories for further thought are provided. The modest assumptions that human relationships exist and that they exist inescapably are intuitively and experientially accessible to every human being.[98] This comparison hopes to demonstrate how the Trinity better accounts for human relationships than *Tawḥīdic* Allah. The conclusive trajectories contend that how someone understands the Deity's

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[96] Here these terms take their creedal denotations. For instance, *hypostasis* in Hebrews 1:3 means "substance" or "nature" but by the time the fourth century creedal develops occur, this term points more to the idea of an "individual subsistence," which is why "person" is a helpful English term for describing it. The Christological use of hypostasis (as in the hypostatic union) and the Trinitarian usage are equivocal, the former's denotation closer to that of Hebrews 1:3 while the latter's denotation is similar to *prosōpon* (person).

[97] Brian Scalise, "Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor," *Eleutheria* 2 (2012), 58 – 76.

[98] Barring cases where there are certain injuries or dysfunctions in/to a human mind.

nature as either Trinitarian or *Tawḥīdic* (monadic) influences the way humans relate, human

governance, and especially about the inner logic of love.

CHAPTER 2: PROLEGOMENA

Introduction

This chapter deals with the technical terms that will facilitate this theological comparison between Islam and Christianity in the light of human relationships. Also, as laying a crucial linguistic-theological foundation to the argument, an interpretative approach explaining how human language is and is not properly predicated of the Deity must be carefully presented. This work will make use of the long tradition of analogical predication. After an explanation on how analogical predication works and why it will be vital here, scriptural texts from both religions are treated in order to observe the need for analogical predication. From this, there are certain analogies based on creation that also need to be accounted for simply because Scripture uses them. Analogical predication sets the context for specifying definitions of crucial terms that follow: *hypostasis*, *perichōrēsis*, *ousia*, *Tawḥīd*, and "the beautiful names of Allah." Furthermore, the apophaticism often complementary to any inquiry into the extent of human knowledge concerning the nature and attributes of the Deity is addressed.

Analogical Predication

Analogical predication is sometimes called analogous interpretation. In order to remain consistent with the terminology in the foregoing context and to avoid confusion, the phrase "analogical predication" will be preferred over "analogous interpretation" hereafter. Analogical predication is a comparison that must include two elements: similarity and dissimilarity.[99]

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[99] Daniel Bonevac, "Two Theories on Analogical Predication," Baylor University Paper Presentation, 2010, accessed July 13, 2014: http://bonevac.info/papers/AnalogicalPredication.pdf. Bonevac gives three major ways analogical predication can be understood: 1) the shared property argument, 2) structural similarity, and 3) and approximation or idealization. The first is the main interest here, that is, that creatures can share a common property with the Deity. There is univocal predication the truly occurs (univocality).The second position deals with structural similarity. The comparison (analogy) between two things are structural similar or share some measure of structural similarity although the two things compared do not share a common property or common properties. This third

Focusing on John Duns Scotus' thought, analogy can be considered even more exact: each

analogy is a comparison that contains element(s) of sameness and disparity.[100] In this sense

herein, an analogy has a univocal element between the referent (subject) and object-compliment

position reasons that some predications only captures an approximation of what is true by abstracting out complicating factors.

[100] John Duns Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, trans. Allan Wolter, THE NELSON PHILOSOPHICAL TEXTS (New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1962), 19 – 20, 24 – 25, and 27 – 32; Scotus deals with a number of difficult but vital issues. He argues that analogical predication can only be effective to convey something "intelligible" of the Deity if there is something predicable of both the Deity and a creature in the same way. In other words, there is an univocal element predicable of both the Deity and the creature. Scotus discusses this "univocal element" as "perfections." These perfections include, but are not limited to, goodness, veracity, action, and especially "being." Using "being" as an example, Scotus demonstrates how a human contemplating the Deity may indeed be confused about the precise nature of the Deity, but this person will not be confused about the "perfection of being" of the Deity. The "being" of creatures informs how the Deity exists as a subsistent; "being" is predicable of both creatures and the Deity in the same way. Scotus notes that all concepts come from the creaturely realm, and he then raises the concern about agnosticism. If the Deity is not known univocally from creaturely things, how then will He be known? Important for Scotus' development and for the protection of divine transcendence is "divine infinity." For Scotus, divine infinity bespeaks a mode of "being" that is not shared with creatures because creatures exist in a mode of finite "being." Predicable to both creatures and the Deity is "being"; the mode of the Deity's being, that is, "an infinite mode," is not predicable to creatures. Scotus relies on Anselm's "divine perfection theology" to reenforce his claim that univocal predication is possible. Simply, if univocal predication is not possible, then the bottom falls out of Anselm's ontological argument because Anselm's argument assumes that the human mind is capable of univocal predication. The human mind conceives some perfection — for instance "good" — and abstractizes that perfection from the creature in which "good" was observed. Then, the human mind tests this perfection to judge its "fittingness" of the Deity: "it is in every respect better to be this perfection than not to be this perfection." Using the example of "good," this statement is reconfigured such that "it is in every respect better to be good than not to be good." Scotus teaches that this perfection of goodness is then maximized, that is, thought of in the highest degree possible. Scotus disapproves of the term "highest" because it is a comparative (or superlative or elative) term. Instead, he says that divine infinity entails the perfections in infinite degrees; therefore, the Deity is infinitely good. Here again, "goodness" is plainly univocally predicable of both the Deity and the creatures from which "goodness" the original observed. The human mind's activity of imagining or conceiving the "infinitizing" of goodness protects the divine transcendence. The univocal "core" or "basis" remains while extending, via the intellect, that core to infinity. For the human mind to capture such at once is impossible since only an infinite mind (the Deity) can do so. This recognition does not deny the "common core" or "univocal meaning" between the Deity and the creature, but this recognition does note the limitations of finite creatures. That is, those in the mode of finite being can understand the Deity, who is in the mode of infinite being, truly (univocally) within their limited horizons as creatures. Anselm of Canterbury, "Monologion," in *The Major Works*, OXFORD WORLD CLASSICS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), chap. 5. Kindle; Anselm, "Proslogion," in *The Major Works*, chap. 5. Kindle; Jeffery Hause, "John Duns Scotus," Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014, accessed July 1, 2014, http://www.iep.utm.edu/scotus/#SH7c; Thomas Williams, "John Duns Scotus," Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 2014, accessed July 6, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=duns-scotus; John Duns Scotus, *God and Creatures: The Quodlibetal Questions*, trans. with an introduction, notes, and glossary by Felix Alluntis and Allan Wolter (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 317 – 318.

predicated of the referent: the same element.[101] Also, an analogy has an equivocal element between this same referent and object-compliment: the disparate element.[102]

The use of analogy in this essay aligns well with the classical tradition. The usage of analogical predication here is intended to protect humans' ability to have true knowledge of the Deity — by affirming that true predications can be made — while circumscribing that knowledge against the backdrop of the infinite and ineffable transcendence of the Deity, never able to *exhaustively* uncover or *fully* articulate His mysteriousness. God reveals Himself truly to humanity while nevertheless concealing Himself in His infinite mode of being, as Scotus argues.[103] This appears paradoxical, but it need not be taken that way. The univocal element predicable of both God and a creature may be spoken of as possessing a "common meaning true

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[101] Another fine definition of an analogy is the use of language proper to one thing extended to another.

[102] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Complete American ed., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (MobileReference, 1265 – 1274), I, Q. 13, Art. 2, 5. Kindle; St. Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity*, bk. 5, chap. 8. Kindle. Augustine avers, "But position, and condition, and places, and times, are not said to be in God properly, but metaphorically and through similitudes." Anthony Thiselton, "The Underlying Problem in Hermeneutics," in *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1980), 10 – 17. Although Thiselton does not treat directly on how human language predicates of the divine, the text and interpreter both have horizons that must fuse. Similarly, *mutatis mutandis*, human language has a horizon that it cannot go beyond in its predicating of the divine while the Deity provides a horizon, by the Deity revealing Himself, and through analogy that univocal element predicates of the divine horizon so that real knowledge of the Deity is achieved and so can be spoken of truly yet not exhaustively. Graham Ward, *Barth, Derrida and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15. Commenting on Barth's view in the *Church Dogmatics* and the importance of Barth's *analogia fidei*, Graham says that "It is only when God's Word (Christ as Logos) takes on human form (as both Jesus of Nazareth and the phonetic/graphic flesh of discourse) that we have genuine knowledge. Revelation (which can only be appropriated retrospectively, as a memory, a 'looking back') enables us to recognize that our language is analogical. The analogical character of language is substantiated by God alone and, as that character appears, so we, as recipients, believe. We read this language by faith, through faith, to faith; we read the language as analogous by revelation, through revealedness to the revealer. . . . therefore, is a participation in the Trinity as Barth describes its operation in chapter 2 of the *Church Dogmatics* — the Father as Revealer, the Spirit as Revealedness and the Son as the Revelation. The doctrine of *analogia fidei* is inseparable from a more general theology of reading which Barth is developing." Avery Dulles, S. J., *Models of Revelation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 97, 133 – 134. Dulles notes that analogous discourse belongs to the "classical tradition" (97). The great dialectical theologians of Brunner, Bultmann, and Barth, Dulles further adds, all "broke out of the frail framework of dialecticism. . . . But the classical doctrine of analogy likewise contained a negative ingredient . . ." (97).

[103] Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 27 – 29. I refer to "God" throughout this paragraph and the next rather than to "the Deity" because Scotus' understanding of predication is mainly in view. This is designed to highlight the Christian perspectivie from which Scotus writes.

of God and a creature." Scotus names the univocal element, which is predicable of God and a

creation, "a perfection."[104] Goodness is such a perfection, and a creature is capable of being good

(good/goodness will be used as exemplar in what follows). The human intellect grasps goodness

in a creature, abstractizes it, postulates goodness to the highest degree possible, and then applies

that to God.[105] The original "goodness" of the creature has the same meaning as the "goodness"

applicable to God (i.e., univocity). Although God's goodness is *also* rightly conceived as

infinitely exceeding a creature's goodness, this does not deny that goodness is a perfection

common to God and creatures. God's goodness shares the common meaning of the goodness of

the creature, but God's goodness is not restricted to it: "Fourthly, I say that we can arrive at

many concepts to God in the sense that they do not apply to creatures. Such are the concepts of

all the pure perfections when taken in the highest degree."[106] Scotus argues that combining a

"pure perfection" with the "highest degree" is essential because it is necessary to clarify "what is

proper to God in the sense that it is characteristic of no other being."[107] Univocal predication in

Scotus' sense does not threaten God's transcendence. This is because God's goodness exceeds or

transcends creaturely goodness without denying that the goodness of the creature shares a

common meaning with the goodness of God. Said more precisely, God's goodness shares a

common meaning with a creature's goodness, yet infinitely transcends it. Therefore, univocal

predication demonstrates that humans can speak truly of God while God's transcendence

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[104] Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 24; Anselm, "Monologion," in *The Major Works*, chap. 16. "So, do not say that the supreme essence is one of those things than which something else is superior, and do say that it is one of those things than which everything else is inferior. This reason has taught us."

[105] Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 24, 26 – 27.

[106] Ibid., 26 – 27.

[107] Scotus, *God and Creatures*, Q. 14, sec. 13 (or pg. 318). "To put it briefly, what I am saying is that any transcendent notion arrived at by abstraction from what is known of a creature can be thought of in its indifference [i.e., as common and unspecified] and in such a case God is conceived confusedly as it were, just as in thinking of animal, man is being thought of. But if such a common transcendent concept is thought of as qualified by some more specific perfection such as supreme, first, or infinite, we obtain a concept which is proper to God in the sense that it is characteristic of no other being."

maintains His beyondness without making Him so beyond that nothing can be known or informatively said about Him.

If univocal predication is achievable based on Scotus' formulation, why bother with analogical predication at all? Making God into the image of creation is idolatry, and it is one of the chief evils committed by humanity (Romans 1:23). Furthermore, creatures only in some of their aspects represent the perfections univocally predicable of God. Thus, in considering a creature *in toto*, there are disparate elements that are properly and only predicable of creatures, and not God. When a creature is considered in its "total" being, they are analogies containing more disparity from God than sameness to Him.[108] The process of removing the disparate elements and rightly finding a "perfection" common to both God and a creature is not easy. Analogical predication highlights the disparity that exists between God and creatures and cautions against idolatry. Moreover, analogical predication also allows for understanding creaturely goodness as both univocal with God's goodness and analogical with God's goodness. This is not a contradiction. Insofar as a creature's goodness is in view, it can be spoken of as common to God's goodness (univocal predication). However, insofar as God's infinite goodness is in view, a creature's goodness is relativized by it. The creature's goodness is thereby shown only to be partially the same to it with an ever greater degree of difference between a creature's finite goodness and God's infinite goodness. Because of these concerns and because univocal predication can be part and parcel to analogical predication, this latter theory of predication is preferred for the purposes of comparing the Christian doctrine of Trinity with the Islamic doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah.

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[108] There may be exceptions to this, but this suffices to safeguard against assuming sameness between God and creatures when no sameness may truly be present.

Accordingly, humans understand the Deity analogically. If Muslims or Christians maintain that only equivocal predications of the Deity are possible, then either group has taken the agnostic turn. Complete equivocation in regards to predicating any perfection, like "good," to the Deity is ultimately predicating nothing informative of the Deity. If how creatures are "good" is in no way the same to how the Deity is good (equivocal predication), then how can someone speak meaningfully of the Deity?[109] A theory of equivocal predication functions by predicated of a creature what *appears* to refer to the same thing (e.g., "good") when predicated of the Deity, but it does not predicate anything of the Deity in the *same way* as what is predicated of the creature. The example, "God is good" and "Gloria is good," assuming equivocal predication, concludes that, however Gloria is good, it is not in any way the same to the ways that God is good.[110]

Univocal predication runs another risk that can be added to those formerly noted. This risk is based on wrongly understanding univocal predication. If univocal predication is not carefully laid out to show how the Deity's transcendence is retained (as discussed earlier), there is a danger of claiming a total equivalence between God's infinite perfections and a creature's

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[109] It might not be readily apparent how this problem leads to agnosticism. The issue will be explored more later, but the issue relates to how human knowledge is constructed — i.e., an epistemological question. Assuming God in Christianity and Allah in Islam do reveal things to humans, how do humans understand those things revealed? Human beings rely on concepts derived from the creation and from their existence in creation to understand what is revealed. The bottom line is that if humans do not use concepts derived from creation in this way, from whence will they get concepts? If God or Allah were to speak in heavenly terms referring to strictly heavenly concepts that in no way share any similarities with the way things are in creation, how could or are these concepts be understood?

[110] Gloria is my wife and she is certainly good. The problem with equivocal interpretation is that nothing meaningful can be said of God. All attributive statements would be something other than what it means when used of a creature. Thus all attributive statements, when said of God, are vacuous at worst or support utter agnosticism at best.

It should be further added that analogies can be investigated to see whether they are to be understood as derivatively made known to creatures by revelation but belonging most rightly and truly as a literal predication of God or to see if humanity "extends" their understanding of, say, goodness "upward" in applying it to God. These are again major matters for inquiry but beyond the present scope of investigation.

finite perfections: i.e., God's infinite goodness is not equivalent to a creature's finite goodness. For the Deity is infinitely beyond. Therefore, this way of forming "univocal predication" is awry because it collapses and eliminates the analogical distance between the Creator's infinite perfections and creatures' finite perfections.[111] *The best shorthand mantra, therefore, for how humans understand the Deity is that they understand Him sufficiently but never exhaustively*: sufficiently because of the univocity (sameness) in analogical predication and never exhaustively because such sameness is relativized in view of God's infinite mode of being.

This mantra accounts for the true disparity that exists between God and creatures without claiming that the disparity is absolute. There is both sameness and disparity as discussed formerly. Complete equivocal predication ultimately undermines communication because it can never be only equivocal or else communication would no longer be co-mmunication. Also, the bent towards rationalizing God into merely creatural modalities so indicative of the Enlightenment *ethos* is resisted. This bent takes various forms, but central to it was the presumption in thinking to objectivize the Deity, i.e., turn the Deity into a creaturely object. The error of attempting to "bring Him down" into the created order so that humanity could have *exhaustive* understanding of Him is likewise avoided.[112] Humans have access to objective truth

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[111] This is not to say that univocal predication should not be pursued since it could well be the case that, by inscripturated revelation, the Deity predicates things of Himself that are univocal predications that are then "shared in" by humanity in creaturely modes and vehicles. The question is whose meaning is extended to whom; is the Deity's meaning extended to humanity? Or is humanity's meaning extended to the Deity? Either way, although theoretically a term might be truly predicated of God (like Fatherhood; Eph. 2:15) as univocal and literal, the human mind's grasping of it (epistemically accesses it) intermingles creaturely elements so that what was truly univocal and literal now morphs to what is analogical and figurative, with more or less univocity and literalness retaining.

[112] "Objectivize" means making the Deity into an object that can be thought of in terms of creatural realities: totalities, or boundaries, or even the One who is the cause is in Himself (*causa sui*). Each of these frameworks of thought about God commits Him to the contours of creational-being, which erroneously puts the Deity on the creature side of the Creator-creature divide. Humans can understand God to degrees but must always "hold open" their conceptions to the *mysterium Dei* rather than condensing the *mysterium Dei* to *non-mysterium Dei*. Merold Westphal, *Overcoming Onto-Theology: towards a postmodern Christian Faith*, PERSPECTIVES IN CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY, series ed. John Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 2 – 3, 6 – 7.

of the Deity but always within the movement of the divine self-giving (in Christianity) or the

divine revealing of the will of the Deity (in Islam).[113] For Christians, it is the supreme revelation

of the Word made flesh, Immanuel, who exegetes the "nameless One" (*'ehyeh *ªšer 'ehyeh*;

YAHWEH; Exod. 3:14), that preeminently conveys the knowledge of the divine, the Bible being a

derivative "Word," unitarily interconnected to, grounded in, and from this incarnate *Logos*,

accessed in and through one Spirit.[114] For Islam, it is the miracle of Allah's Speech to

Muhammad and thereby to humanity, the priceless Qur'an, which Sunni Muslim theologians

attribute "eternality." This eternal Speech (Qur'an) explicates the will of Allah for humanity and

discloses humanity's role and relationship to Him, inviting — at least in Sufi lines of thought —

each human to come, by the merciful hand of Allah, and be united to Him, knowing, thinking

upon, and being changed by the wonders in the "beautiful names of Allah."

Analogia in Scripturīs

     That analogical predication is necessary for understanding the Deity is drawn not only

from philosophical theology but also from observing the way Scripture uses language. Especially

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     God, of course, can make Himself into a creaturely object, but He does not do so as an "object." Instead God makes Himself into the Lordly Subject as the doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus maintains. The objection in the text above deals with humans attempting to do this in ways that terminate the transcendent distance of the Deity. The incarnation does not terminate the transcendent distance, but, rather, it is the crux to connection humanity to the transcendly distant Deity. The Son can speak of Himself as in the "bosom" of the Father while incarnated and that His knowledge of the Father while incarnated is such that all other claims to knowing God are as nothing: " . . . no one knows the Father except the Son . . ." (Matt. 11:26).

     [113] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God,* 13. Torrance says "God may be known only through God, and is known only as he makes himself known to us through the revealing and saving agency of his Word and Spirit." Although Islam differs on what is revealed — it is rather the Deity's will for humanity on what they are to do and think rather than they are to think and do as aligned with who God is — there are certainly characteristics of Deity made known (Ninety-nine beautiful names) through the Qur'an. Muslims are not uniform in considering the Qur'an to be eternal but this is said to be the majority position. There is something eternal (the Qur'an) making known the eternal one (Allah). Krokus, "Divine Embodiment," 158 – 169.

     [114] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 14. Exodus 3:14; John 1:18. I am gratefully indebted to Dr. John Morrison's contribution to my knowledge of matters pertaining to bibliology and revelation. Much of my language in this section owes to personal conversations and to a chapter in his book: John Morrison, "Einstein, Torrance, and Calvin: A Christocentric, Multileveled, Interactive Model of Scripture as the Written Word of God" in *Has God Said? Scripture, the Word of God, and the Crisis of Theological Authority*, THE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY MONOGRAPH SERIES, ed. David Baker (Eugene OR: Pickwick Publications, 2006), 221 – 244.

important is anthropomorphism, which is a specific type of analogy. Comparing humans to Allah, and then to God, are central to this project, so it will benefit to see the way the Qur'an compares humanity to Allah and the way the Bible compares humanity to God. Specifically, does the Qur'an use language that supposes sameness (univocity) between humanity and the Deity? Does the Bible do the same?

Anthropomorphism is found in both the Qur'an and the Christian Bible. In the Bible, the Deity is said to have hands (Ps. 10:12) and is seen to hold something in it (Rev. 5:1). He has a throne (Ps. 11:4) and is sitting on it as well (Rev. 20:11). The Qur'an, too, can speak of the Deity as ascending His throne (Surah 32:4), having a throne (Surah 85:15), and being carried on it by angels (Surah 69:17).[115] Allah rules by His hand (Surah 67:1). Both the Bible and the Qur'an can speak of the Deity's "face" or "countenance" (Surah 55:27; Num. 6:25). The point is that there is some analogy of humans' everyday life and interactions with other humans necessary to understand these texts. All have seen others use their hands to accomplish something. Many have surely observed someone occupying a seat of power and authority. Certainly, we understand "presence" through being near another human's face. To recall, "analogy" in the sense developed herein supposes some univocity (sameness) and equivocity (disparity). If the univocal element is dismissed, then whatever the Bible and Qur'an are speaking about will simply be unknown.[116]

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[115] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād Fī Al-I' Tiqād* [*Al-Ghazālī's Moderation in Belief*] trans. Aladdin M. Yaqub (Chicago: The Univesity of Chicago Press, 2013), 1st Treatise, 8th proposition. Kindle. Ghazālī thoroughly endorses analogical interpretation in this section for the scholars although he doubts the ablity of the "populace" to grasp what is intended. For instance, he states, "Let us return to the meaning of 'sitting' and 'descending'. As for sitting, it unquestionably involves the throne's having a relation to God. It is not possible for the throne to have a relation to Him unless it is something known, or willed, or is an object of God's power, or is a locus such as the locus of a mode, or is a place such as where a body resides. Some of these relations are conceptually impossible and some are linguistically unsuitable for metaphorical analogy."

[116] David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, FOUNDATIONS OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY, ed. John S. Feinberg (Wheaton Il: Crossway Books, 2003), 356." Clark discusses the same concern about losing truly informative revelation via the Bible: ". . . evangelical theology cannot duplicate the Brahmanic move by emphasizing God's infinity and transcendence in such an absolute sense as to render human language

The majority of Muslims and "orthodox" Christians hold their Scriptures to be revelatory

and to thus function as the Word or Speech of the Deity.[117] This means that the

anthropomorphisms found in Scripture are analogies chosen by the Deity to describe Himself.[118]

For humans to understand what these analogies mean, however, they must draw understanding

from the field of their experience, knowledge, and intellectual processes (i.e., abstractizing,

reasonsing, understanding, sensing, acting, judging, willing, and so forth). There is a connection

here to the earlier discussion about Scotus' position on univocal predication. The very possibility

of univocal predication assumes that there is a creaturely perfection that has a common meaning

completely inadequate for describing God. Certain Hindu and Muslim ways of understanding God move in this direction. To concede that all speech about God is completely equivocal nullifies the evangelical commitment to the Bible as truly informative revelation."

[117] It would be amiss not to mention that Islam understands revelation as less of "revealing" and more of "solemn or awe-inspiring communication." Yahya Michot, "Revelation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. Tim Winter, CAMBRIDGE COMPANIONS TO RELIGION (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 180. Further, although that the Qur'an is Allah's eternal Speech is the majority view today this has not always been the case. It may at first appear somewhat ludicrous to suppose that the Qur'an could not be held to be God's Word but juxtaposed with Allah's transcendence and *Tawḥīd* (singularity) it becomes clear why holding it to be eternal is troubling — as is holding it not to be eternal. If the Qur'an is not to violate *Tawḥīd* and be thought to be eternal, then it must be intrinsic to Allah's essence. But, if this is case, then the Qur'an does give true propositions about who/what Allah is and so complicates Allah's transcendence. Moreover, this suggests an internal differentiation in Allah' essence, which begins to look much like the Christian doctrine of Trinity. Another problem issuing from believing the Qur'an to be eternal occurs if the Qur'an is thought to be eternal to Allah's essence. This stance protects against violating Allah's transcendence but now violates *Tawḥīd* by introducing a multiplicity by taking the Qur'an as co-eternal but not internal to Allah's essence. These thoughts are a paraphrase of Nader El-Bizri's work: "God: Essence and Attributes," in Nader El Bizri, *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*.

[118] It should be further noted that there is the question of where the basis (or literal meaning) of analogy lies, as either originating in the Deity or originating in humanity. To be fair to Torrance's thought, his understanding of humanity is one qualified by the *imago Dei* and, as such, man is not used to describe God but God should be used to describe man. And this "describing" occurs in the reciprocity entailed in the God-man relationship, which is at once a God-manward expression by God and, then, in response a man-Godward expression by man. This is more a matter for Christian theology than for Islamic theology. Thomas Torrance, citing Oliver Quick, describes analogies originating from the Deity as theomorphic analogies and anthropomorphism should be thought of as an ingredient of this reciprocal relationship between God and man that entails, therefore, always a theo-morphic component. Oliver Quick, *Doctrines of the Creed* (London: 1947), 29 – 32. Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 106.

Moreover, although a dictation theory of "inspiration" is accepted in Islam, there is participation in the revealing process by man in the Christian view of "inspiration." Briefly, God is the source of the content to be revealed while man participates as the "agent through whom" the message arrives in history. The agency of man may include style, vocabulary, genre, and structure, among other literary components. Thus, as an example based on this potential Christian view, God may reveal the content that "He is the Creator," and the human agent may choose to use the anthropomorphism of a "Potter with clay" to relay this content. Theoretical bibliology is no easy task, so hopefully this short comment on the matter suffices to avoid unneeded digression. Lastly, anthropomorphisms may do more than just describe the Deity — i.e., direct, promise, encourage, etc.

to the divine perfection when considered finitely. To use "goodness/good" again as an example will be helpful. The creaturely finite goodness of Elijah would be the creaturely referent drawn from the field of human creaturely existence (knowing, experiencing, reasoning, etc.). This "notion" of "goodness" can be used as a basis to speak about the Deity: "The Deity is good." It must be recalled that the Deity would not be restricted to merely the finite "goodness" of Elijah, but the knowledge of Elijah's "goodness" logically precedes the knowledge of the "goodness" of the Deity. Elijah's goodness acts as the epistemological starting point for understanding "divine goodness."[119] It is true that the Deity reveals that He is good, but there is no way to come to know what "good" means apart from the creaturely processes involved in learning what is "good" in creaturely existence.

Al-Ghazālī, perhaps the most significant Muslim thinker at any time, discusses the process of predicating analogies to Allah.[120] His process of handling them is similar to what, following Anselm, Scotus advocated. Furthermore, it supports the contension above that humans know creaturely things first before moving to know things about the Deity.[121] A particularly fruitful point Al-Ghazālī makes is about the function of analogies. He cites a saying of the Prophet Muhammad: "The heart of the believer is between two fingers of the Compassionate."[122] Then, he describes how to understand this: "For the scholar, it indicates a metaphorical meaning rather than a literal one. It signifies what the finger is for. It is as if He called His power "a finger" because the *function* of the finger—and its spirit and nature—is the ability to turn things

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[119] Scotus, *Philosophical Writings,* 24. "According to Anselm, then, we first know something to be a pure perfection and secondly we attribute this perfection to God. Therefore, it is not a pure perfection precisely in so far as it is in God."

[120] As cited above, Al-Ghazālī's discussion of this is excellent. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī's Moderation*, 1st treatise, 8th proposition. Kindle.

[121] Scotus, *Philosophical Writings*, 24.

[122] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī's Moderation*, 1st treatise, 8th proposition. Kindle.

as it pleases" (Italics mine).[123] Before continuing on with Al-Ghazālī general treatment of analogies, the importance of "function" in the question of predication of the Deity cannot be overlooked.

William Alston adapted "functionalism," a theory of the philosophy of mind, to address the question of the possibility of speaking literally about God.[124] David Clark appropriates Alston's thought as well to argue for the actuality of univocal predication of the Deity.[125] The contribution made by Al-Ghazālī's point, supported later by Alston and Clark, is that the function can be the univocal element that has a common meaning between a creature and the Deity. It is "the power or ability to accomplish things as pleased" that the analogy of "finger" presents as the common meaning between a creature's figure and the Deity's "figure." Focusing on "function" in this way is another helpful strategy for overcoming the disparity between the Deity as infinite and creatures as finite. The function is the same (univocal meaning), which enables humans to speak univocally about some perfection of the Deity, but the internal structures (e.g., finite or infinite) or the modalities by which the function is accomplished are not commented upon.[126] During Al-Ghazālī's discussion of what "sitting" means when predicated of Allah, he cites Mālik ibn Anas, the founder of the Mālikī school of Islamic jurisprudence: "The sitting is known, its modality is unknown, to ask about it is a heresy, and to believe in it is a duty."[127] To refuse comment on the modality while affirming something true of the Deity has a long history in Muslim thought.

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[123] Ibid.

[124] William P. Alston, "Functionalism and Theological Language" in *Divine Nature and Human Language: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 71.

[125] Clark, *To Know and Love God*, 361 – 363.

[126] Ibid., 363.

[127] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī's Moderation*, 1st treatise, 8th proposition.

Al-Ghazālī continues to give examples of how to deal with analogies, and some of them are anthropomorphisms. He deals with predicating of Allah the analogies of finger, trotting, longing, the black stone, descending, and sitting on the throne. As he addresses each, what is common to his method is the starting point of creaturely existence. He describes the literal meaning of the above terms and phrases, then he appeals to reason, intuition, theology, or "linguistic suitability" for deciding what needs to be removed and retained for predicating the terms and phrases of Allah. The same general method for predication of the Deity observed in Scotus is argued for by Al-Ghazālī. Scotus' argumentation is more complex than Al-Ghazālī's development, but both methods share this process: mentally grasping a creature or some creaturely reality, purifying it of what is only creaturely, and then applying it to the Deity. The method for speaking truly of the Deity is not so different between Al-Ghazālī and Scotus. That univocal predication is possible should remain an exigence because, without it, agnosticism is not far off. Without univocal predication, therefore, humans would be unavoidably locked out of speaking truly of the Deity.[128] This makes religious speech of any sort an activity in ambiguity and ultimately precludes the possibility of predicating truly of the Deity. It seems that disallowing univocal predication turns so-called religious speech of the Deity into self-projecting human subjectivism.[129]

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[128] William P. Alston, "Religious Language," in *The Oxford Handbook on Philosophy of Religion*, ed. William J. Wainwright, OXFORD HANDBOOKS OF PHILOSOPHY, ed. Paul Moser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), chap. 10, sec. 7 and 8. Kindle. Alston effectively titles what has been developed herein as "partial univocity," and he notes that it has been pervasively ignored (sec. 7). Of course, if predications of God are partially univocal with creatures, then that leaves elements of the predication that are equivocal, or unable to be applied to God. Hence, what "partial univocity" entails in Alston's treatment is the same as the recognition herein that there is sameness and disparity in predications of God and that univocal meaning common to God and creatures is common in a finitude but uncommon when considered by God's infinity.

[129] Nader El-Bizri describes the Mu'tazilite position on the attributes of God having the same problem: "God," in Nader El-Bizri, *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 123. "The Mu'tazilite thesis regarding the creation of the Qur'an appears as ill founded on the same grounds that it presupposes, namely, the radical observance of God's transcendence. By stressing transcendence, the belief in the scripture's created status implies

The Deity's self-application of creaturely analogies to describe Himself is a fact of the Qur'an and the Bible. Deciding what is properly predication of the Deity becomes increasingly complex with the accumulation and recognition of the great diversity of human experiences and systems of knowledge. The trouble comes from societal/cultural differences because, as John Milbank elucidates, sociologists' attempts to universalize "society" in their interpretive schema for reductionistically explaining religion fails.[130] It is historical particularity that grounds sociology. So long as humanity continues to reflect its very diverse ways, no sociological attempt to universalize that diversity can represent humans accurately. Hence, the meanings of both words and their significance for a society are inevitably historically situated or contextualized.

John Searle, in his famous *Speech-Acts*, drove home how historical situatedness contributes to sentence meaning and usage as real action in speech-acts.[131] Devotees of Islam or Christianity must today become attuned to the original historical context of the writer(s) of their respective Scriptures, what historians call the "historical horizon," to properly understand those predications.[132] The historical horizon of the original recipients provides the meanings of words then, in that horizon. For instance, *prautētos* ("gentleness"; Eph. 4:2) in the Pauline corpus of the New Testament means something very different than what "gentleness" today probably brings to the mind of the average American living in the South. *Prautētos*, in Koine Greek as

that the divine attributes are not real, but are rather revealed in a worldly language for the convenience of human comprehension. The reality of divinity seems to be determinable by the judgements of human reason . . . ."

[130] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: beyond secular Reason*, reprinted (1990; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2001), 259 – 265.

[131] John Searle, *Speech Act: an Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 72 – 85. Speech acts are constituted by three major components set within a historical context. The three components are locution, illocution, perlocution. Locutions are utterances, that is, the phonemes and morphemes used to express sentences. Illocution is what is done with a sentence: to promise, support, assert, question, etc. Perlocution is the intended effect of the sentence.

[132] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, rep. (1971; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chap. 6, sec. 1. Kindle. Lonergan's discussion is a philosophy of historical horizons.

used during the first century while Paul was writing, signifies having a proper evaluation of

oneself, sincerity in conversation related to proper self-evaulation, and not to be presumptuous.

Thus, in analogical predication, the modern interpreter needs to learn this meaning, and then ask

what "gentleness" means when predicated of the Deity. Such predication would mean that "not

to be presumptuous" would have to be discarded since the Deity is omniscient. That the Deity

would be "sincere" in conversation would seem to be something properly predicated of Him.

This interpretive task would be similar for both Muslims and Christians. Admittedly, Islam's

task may be easier or, at least, less open to perversion since Muslims affirm the "unique

inspiration" of the Arabic text of the Qur'an. Christians must account for the distance imposed

by both historical and linguistic considerations: those derived from affirming the inspiration of

translations to the extent that they reflect the original Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic.[133] In some

sense, both Muslims and Christians are attempting to form themselves in a community around

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[133] These limited epistemological comments, along with the former section on analogical interpretation, present a largely traditional logo-centric account of sign and referent, albeit tempered by the wisdom of postmodernity. This is no epistemological treatise and so these admittedly concise epistemological comments will have to serve. If the sign is disconnected from the substantial-referent (i.e., the logo-centric "presence" or "objective" correlate for the term "hand"), as would have to be the case if Allah's use of the revelatory term "hand" were disconnected from any creaturely referent "hand," then the logic of postmodernity takes over. And this logic, summarized well by the phrase, "the difference between the signifier and the signified," highlights by its deconstructive agenda the implicit instability of language and concludes that language is, at the last analysis, ambiguous. Language is further largely capricious on a postmodernist account since appeals to "truth," i.e., some presence to ground terminology, are understood as disingenuous, deceptive, or foolish, because there is no ground that "locks" meaning down. These appeals to truth are really the capricious enforcement of the will of the one using this language over another who is addressed. Truth, on postmodernism, is a power-play. This logic, if it were true, seems potently correct. Because meaning, on postmodernism, cannot be "locked down" but is always a matter of unending deferment (i.e., the language game) from one sign to the next, never arriving at some "locked down meaning" (the *archē* or *principium*), to stand and state that one has the truth and so others should listen to them and submit to the truth is a play for power under the pretense of a rhetoric mediating stabilized meaning (or presence). Needless to say, neither Christianity nor Islam can accept this postmodernist account of language. To take several steps in that direction is to surrender the cherished belief that there is the stable presence of the Deity, the One who grounds by His presence/logic/wisdom all that is. David Holdcroft, *Saussure: Signs, System, and Arbitrariness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 25 – 68; Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998). It is difficult to limit the importance of this work to just a number of page numbers but part one of this work is the most relevant for what is stated above: "Undoing Interpretation: Authority, Allegory, Anarchy." David Clark, "Diverse Perspectives and Theological Knowledge," *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology*, FOUNDATION OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY, ed. John Feinberg (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003). John Milbank, *Theology & Social Theory,* 260 – 261.

the historical horizon of the scriptural text while accounting for the continual flux and essential difference of the contemporary horizon.

Analogia Entis and Apophaticism

That there are certain anthropomorphisms in both the Qur'an and the Bible then sets the question of whether other terms derived from creation can act analogically for understanding the Deity. The case for creation as a means to know God (not presupposing salvation; e.g., prevenient) is well known in the New Testament passage, Romans 1:20, even if there is a divergence in opinion on how the text should be understood: "For His invisible attributes are conspicuously clear from the creation of the cosmos, being known by created things, both His eternal power and divinity . . . ." (trans. mine). Creation is a mode of revelation, however this mode is understood. Christian theology has long accepted creation as revelatory in manifesting God and His attributes. This essay would be yet another example of thinking on what creation, including human creatures, suggests about the Deity (especially since God chose the human analogy as His image, Genesis 1:26 – 28; 2:4).[134] Nevertheless, both Muslims and Christians hold Genesis to be Scripture. This means that using humans and their interrelating (i.e., anthropomorphisms) are both *analogiae in Scripturā* for both Islam and Christianity, and not only anthropomorphisms drawn from *analogia entis*. Since *Scritpurā* sanctions humans and their relationality as analogies, then there is sure footing for looking to *analogia entis* for the concrete actualization of these approved analogies.

Although it is clear that the Qur'an is meant to be a guide for mankind and thus not revelatory in the Christian sense of God's self-giving to be truly known as He is, it nevertheless

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[134] That all creation is reflective of God and especially humanity due to their being made in the *Imagō Deī* is not contested but seemingly universally accepted by all Christians. As such, attention in this section will focus on Islam since sometimes applying anthropomorphisms to Allah is considered the sin of *Tashbīh*.

stands that humanity is guided regarding how to live and poise themselves *in relation to* Allah.[135]

The Qur'an's teaching helps to form man into a proper way of life in view of Allah as *Rabb*

(Lord). The Qur'an intends to orient man to Allah. These three phrases, "in relation to," "to form

man in view of Allah," and "orients man to Allah," all entail an inherent relationship to Allah

and presupposes the possibility of that relationship.[136]

It is in this sense that the Qur'anic revelation requires, as part of its mediatorial function,

an Allah-human relationship. The Qur'an is intended to mediate Allah's will to humanity as

delivered by Jibril and passively received by Muhammad.[137] From here, a number of

relationships come to the fore: the relationships between Muhammad and Allah, between

Muhammad and Allah's Speech (Qur'an), between Allah and humanity, between Muhammad

and humanity, and between Allah and His Prophet (Muhammad; *Shahadah*) on the one hand and

the *Umma* on the other.

As Creator, Allah has been in relationship with humans since the creation of Adam. Islam

stresses dissimilarity far more greatly than similarity between Allah's relating to humans and

humans relating to other humans.[138] Nevertheless, what is the same to both is relating by speech.

All human relationships take as a constitutive aspect "speech" or "communication." So this

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[135] Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1989), 1.

[136] And one author has discussed that this relationship with Allah can be one of true love. Shaykh Zulfiqar Ahmad, *Love for Allah*, trans. Brigadier Ashfaq Ashraf, 2nd ed. (2001; Chicago: Faqir Publications, 2004).

[137] Jabril is the same entity as the angel Gabriel in the Bible.

[138] Watt, *Islam and Christianity today,* 51. "Islam also emphasizes another aspect of transcendence, namely, God's difference from men (*mukhālafa*), and insists that anthropomorphic terms cannot be applied to God in the literal sense." Watt does not have the only word on this. Muhammad Abdul Rauf, *Islam: Creed and Worship* (Washington, D. C.: The Islamic Center, 1974), 2 – 3. "God is the essence of existence. His Arabic name is Allah. He is the First and the Last. He is unique and nothing resembles Him in any respect. He is One and the One. He is self-sustained, does not need anything but everything needs Him." This position that nothing resembles Him in any respect is inimical to the analogies the Qur'an itself uses.

communicative "speech" of Allah takes an analogical correlate or similarity in human-to-human

relationships. But is this "inventing a similitude" of Allah, a *tamthīl*, which is expressly

forbidden in the Qur'an (Surah 16:74)?[139] If "inventing" is understood as fabrication then, no,

this is not occurring. If taken as "discovering," then, yes, these observations on the similarity

between how Allah relates to humans and how humans relate to one another could be accused of

violating Surah 16:74.[140] Whether the accusation is viable or not given Al-Ghazālī "Mulism

position" on analogical predication is another question.

The validity of analogically predicating "perfections" of Allah (in Scotus' and Al-

Ghazālī's sense) is supported by Allah's "ninety-nine beautiful names" derived more or less

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[139] If W. Watt, cited just above is right, it would be inventing similitudes and applying them literally to Allah that would be inappropriate, not analogically. Further, it is *Tashbīh*, literal anthropomorphism, which is regularly forbidden by Muslim scholars although where to draw on how much analogical anthropomorphism is allowable is certainly not monolithic. No less a fundamental scholar than Ibn Taymīyya used categories of human relationships when speaking about the relationship between Creator and creation: "The Lord is supremely independent in every respect from everything other than Him, and everything that is not him is in need of him in every respect. This is part of the meaning of His name "Al-Samad." "The Rock" is that to which everything turns (*yasmud*) because of its dependence upon Him." Taqi al-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyya, *Al-Jawab Al-Sahih* [*A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*] ed. and trans. with introduction Thomas F. Michel, S.J., STUDIES IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE, eds. George Hourani, Muhsin Mahdi, Parviz Morewedge, Nicholas Rescher, and Ehsan Yar-Shater (Delmar, NY: Caravan Books, 1984), 316. These relational ideas are seemingly denied by Taymīyya a bit later: "Similarly, these people do not raise the understanding of their hearts to the Lord of the universe who is beyond every thing and dissimilar to his creatures" (321). This is largely different from Ghazali's view who sees everything as some unification to and in Allah Himself: Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, vol. 6, bk. 36, trans. Reza Shah-Kazemi.

[140] Two pairs of pericopae from the Qur'an illustrate the difficulty of the Qur'an's teaching on "similitudes."

Legitimacy of Similitudes

57:3   He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden.

    24:35   Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The similitude of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as it were a shining star. (The Lamp is) kindled from a blessed tree, an olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would almost glow forth (of itself) though no fire touched it. Light upon light. Allah guideth unto His light whome He will. And Allah speaketh to mankind in allegories, for Allah is Knower of all things. (cf. 2:256, the famous Throne-verse).

Illegitimacy of Similitudes

16:74   So coin not similitudes for Allah. Lo! Allah knows; you know not.

42:11   Nothing is as His likeness.

directly from the Qur'an.[141] This is because so many of these names entail Allah-human relations and must be analogically understood by human-human relations. Therefore, understanding Allah by means of human relationships is a divinely sanctioned method, not one made up or discovered by humans.[142] As an example, the human experience of relating is part of the process of coming to understand the name, *Ar-Rahman* (the All-Merciful). The exercise of mercy in human-human relations enables humans to understand in finite terms how Allah is merciful (univocity), but not simply merciful like a creature (analogical). His mercy infinitely exceeds such. Hence, this "infinite exceeding" is well-conveyed with the addition of "all" in "All-Merciful." Still, the creaturely expression of mercy is the conceptual foundation from which to extend human thought about Allah's mercy, about how much greater His mercy is. This same type of formulation is made for many of the names of Allah: *Al-Mu'min* (Inspirer of Faith), *Ar-Qahhar* (the Subduing One), *Al-Hakim* (the Judge), *Al-Muqit* (the Nourisher), *Al-Wali* (the Governor), and so forth.[143] To object to this with the argument that the names only indicate His activity is to

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[141] At least on a certain stance on how the attributes relate to Allah's essence. As Nader El-Bizri articulates regarding the Ash'arite position, "Ash'arī argued that God's words about God, as manifested in the Qur'an, set up the directives by virtue of which reasoned judgements about the essence-attributes question are to be measured. The affirmation of God's attributes should be coupled with the negation of implied anthropomorphic determinations." Is this not one of the tasks of Christian theology, purifying language applied to God of improper creaturely implications? However, Ash'arī, reports El-Bizri, goes further: "Analogy is problematic when it hints at any form of similitude between God and anything in His world of creation." It might be wondered why anyone would go on using the word analogy at all at this point. Nadri El-Bizri, "God," *Cambridge Companion for Classical Islamic*, 128 – 129.

[142] Harun Yahya-Adnan Oktar, *Names of Allah* (Global Publishing, 2011). This book goes through each of the beautiful names of Allah and explains the Qur'anic foundation for each.

On a different matter, Muslims might find what is said here objectionable. Islam, however, is not monolithic on these matters, which is both historically and contemporarily demonstrable. Ibn Taymayyi's semantic mode of reference for the Qur'an, for instance, is linked patently to creaturely language (which entails relating) because "meaning is nothing deeper than the use of ordinary words in particular contexts." Paul A. Hardy, "Epistemology and Divine Discourse," *Cambridge Companion for Classical Islamic*, 295; Hardy is commenting on Ibn Taymīyyi, *Majmūʿ Fatāwā*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Qāsim and Muḥammad (Rabat, n.d.), xx: 496.

[143] If the name considered requires the question, "To whom?" then this beautiful name requires "another" and since Allah is not internally differentiated (like the Trinity) the name implies relationship to creatures and so likewise entails the analogy of human-to-human relationship. For a human to be merciful to another human is always already an expression of a relationship for without the relationship there would be no condition for mercy to be shown.

commit the sin of *ta'ṭīl*.[144] This would be to deny that these names really convey truth about Allah's nature and so would divest Allah of His attributes.[145]

There may be another objection to analogical ascription to Allah, namely, using mysticism to cut off continued investigation. This defense via mysticism emphasizes Allah's radical transcendence (Surah 16:74). The evidence used throughout — human relationships and their inescapability — becomes dubious if Allah's transcendence is understood in this radical way. The question is whether or not the claim that Allah is utterly unlike anything in creation is convincing. Nadir El-Bizri explains, "Analogy is problematic when it hints at any form of similitude between God and anything in His world of creation."[146] Is such utter dissimilarity defendable? Although Al-Ghazālī supported the use of analogical predication as seen earlier, a few more responses will demonstrate the unfeasibility of claiming such a radical transcendence for Allah.

The essential attributes attributed to Allah that "Muslims ascribe to God [are] all the noble names and attributes that befit his holy character. However, traditionally they insist on learning and remembering the following thirteen attributes specifically: "Existence, Eternity, Perpetuity, Dissimilarity, Self-Sustenance, Unity, Might, Will, Knowledge, Life, Hearning, Sight and Speech." Muhammad Abdul Rauf, *Islam: Creed and Worship* (Washington, D. C.: The Islamic Center, 1974), 4 – 5.

[144] Michael Oldham, *Allah and Elohim* (Tate Publishing, 2013), chap. 3, introduction. Kindle. "The attributes of Allah are commonly known as *al-asmā' wa'l-ifāt* — the Names and Qualities or Attributes of God." Most Islamic scholars caveat their remarks regarding the attributes of Allah. For, at its foundation, Islam has an unresolved theological contradiction. Attributing human characteristics to Allah is regarded as a sin, *tashbīh*, but so is its opposite, *tatīl*, which means divesting Allah of all attributes."

[145] Even Ibn Taymīyya says the attributes disclose something of who Allah is because attributes for Ibn Taymīyya subsist in the one whom the attribute describes. Ahmad ibn Taymiyya, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 269, 272, 273, and especially 279, which states: ". . . for the life of God is an attribute subsisting in God's essence, not in anything else, nor particularized in some one of the created things outside of Him."

[146] Nadri El-Bizri, "God," *Cambridge Companion for Classical Islamic*, 128 – 129.

The *Shahadah* predicates aloneness (unicity; *Tawḥīd*) of Allah.[147] Muslims, therefore, are not ignorant about the nature of Allah in at least this regard. This monotheistic affirmation cannot stand in agnosticism, which is the inevitable result of affirming an utter otherness of Allah (or Allah's radical transcendence). An irony occurs by holding to radical transcendence because "otherness" is predicable of creatures, which means that "otherness" should not be predicable of Allah. If the first phrase of the *Shahadah* is not to become completely vacuous ("There is no god but Allah . . . ."), the typical portrayals of Allah's singularity must act analogically for understanding Allah's aloneness.[148] The response, "But Allah is beyond even this," only reiterates the original problem leading to blank agnosticism. If He is "beyond even this" with no analogical/creaturely correlate, then how do Muslims know that "there is no god but God?" There must be some link between what Muslims' claim to know and how Allah actually is for truth to be in the expression "there is no god but God." Otherwise, the monotheistic claim fails, and the question marks of agnosticism reign.[149] In this way, the creaturely understanding of "oneness/loneness" must be used analogically to comprehend Allah's *Tawḥīd* or else the first part of the *Shahadah* becomes empty.

Second, going with the majority view that the Qur'an is Allah's eternal Speech, there is a representation of Allah making known in the Qur'an what is necessary for humanity.[150] Although

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[147] And the *Shahadah* does not appear in the Qur'an in its composite form although "its two halves occur separately." Surah 4:136 is the closest basis for the *Shahadah*. H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism: an Historical Survey*, 2nd ed. (1949; New York: Galaxy Book, 1962), 53.

[148] And this does not violate the prohibition against predicating something creaturely of Allah literally since whatever singularity means in the creatural cosmos exist preeminently in Allah.

[149] Why someone would know that "something" is there while claiming that any knowledge of whatever this thing might be is inaccessible is incoherent. For this reason and because Islam is a religion of revelation, appeal to transcendence to forgo investigation or to remove from creatures any ability to inquire into this Deity who gives revelation is at once an affront to the revelation and an undermining of one's own revelatory worldview and religion.

[150] Taking the Qur'an as co-eternal suggests if not affirms that Islam is truly a binitarian tradition of monotheism, which is no far different than the early Christian binitarian view of monotheism as God (Greek: "God,"

the Qur'an is not a revelation of Allah's self-giving to be known as He is, it is a revelation of His guidance.[151] Still, Allah's "ninety-nine beautiful names" suggest that the Qur'an is more than a revelation for guidance. Rather, the "ninety-nine beautiful names" indicate true predications of who Allah is along with the guidance the "names" no doubt give. Allah reveals Himself partially, but He also reveals to humanity, by His Speech, what is good for them.[152] But how should this be understood? There is a tension here between Allah's "beautiful names" as disclosures of who Allah is and the Qur'an as *merely* guidance to humanity (Surah 2:185). The revelation of what Allah is like by His "beautiful names" and the guidance of humanity by the Qur'an must together be understood as delivered in the one revelation of the Qur'an. Otherwise, the contents of the

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Theos) and His Word (Greek: "Word," *Logos*). It is doubtful that this would ever be admitted or put forth by Muslims since it is a severe complication or even contravention of *Tawḥīd*. This is within their rights as a tradition of revelation that always allows for ineffability, which does not demand that their views be seen as incoherent or contradictory. Christians allow this for themselves in numerous theological doctrines. And if the Deity is truly infinite then this stance is not only an option but indeed demanded. I owe this thought to my mentor, Dr. Edward Smither. Watt, *Islam and Christianity today*, 49. Watt notes that problem of the Qur'an being thought of as distinct as a major problem for *Tawḥīd*.

[151] Kateregga, Badru D. and David W. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity: a Muslim and Christian in Dialogue* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 88. "Nevertheless, the Christian witness emphasizes the self disclosure of God (hence the 'Trinity'), while in Islam it is the will and guidance of God which is revealed." This is the Muslim response (Kateregga) to Christian's section on God's oneness. Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 3. "The Qur'an is no treatise about God and His nature: His existence, for the Qur'an, is strictly functional — He is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and of man, and particularly the giver of guidance for man and He who judges man, individually and collectively, and metes out to him merciful justice." Michot, "Revelation," *Cambridge Companion for Classical Islamic*, 181.

[152] Yahya Michot, commenting on Ibn Taymiyya, says that the godhead of Allah can be discussed from an ethical standpoint: "It is relative to religion, not metaphysics, and thus beyond His seignioriality, that God's godhead can properly be investigated. Godhead (*ilāhiyya*), the Damascene theologian Ibn Taymiyya (d. 1328) explains, is not the power to create of a God (*al-ilāh*), understood in the sense of the active participle *ālih*, "creating". *Al-ilāh*, "the God", is to be understood in the sense of the passive participle *al-ma'lūh*, "the divinized one", or "the divinisable one", which is to say, He who has the exclusive right to be made divine (*uliha*) and is the only one entitled to be worshipped and loved." Yahya Michot, "Revelation," *Cambridge Companion for Classical Islamic*, 181.

Qur'an are presented reductionistically, stressing the guidance of the Qur'an to such a degree that the disclosures of what Allah is like by the "beautiful names" are ignored or dismissed.[153]

The Qur'an as the eternal Speech of Allah contains both revelatory teachings about who Allah is and how humanity should live. The Qur'an as Speech is a representation of Allah in verbalized form. If the Qur'an is eternal as held by Sunni Muslims, it is a timeless Book, or verbalization, on how creatures should act if or when Allah creates them and intimations of whom He is. The Qur'an as a book of guidance for creatures is a sort of "other voicing" (or conversation) with Allah's potential creatures — creatures that are not eternal themselves and thus "began" when created.[154] The Qur'an's address to these potential creatures would contain a verbalized representation of Allah carried out by His "beautiful names" while also directing these potential creatures by the guidance contained in the Qur'an. Therefore, Allah would eternally be in a kind of relationship to Allah's Speech, which Speech is not Allah Himself inasmuch as Allah's eternal Speech is Allah's actual address to His potential creatures.[155] These potential creatures are said thereby to constitute "others," which are addressed, but the Qur'an would not need to include guidance to these "others" if these potential creatures were never created.[156]

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[153] Watt, *Islam and Christianity today*, 51. "The Islamic conception of God's transcendence might seem to exclude any possibility of his immanence, but this is not so. There is some sense in which, according to the Qur'ān, God acts through men." Surahs 8:17 and 50:16 testify to this.

[154] Some hold that the attributes are in the divine essence (so Ibn Taymīyya above) and others that the attributes only reveal how Allah relates to creation and that the essence of divinity is totally unknowable.

[155] If it is contested that the Qur'an is one with Allah and not other, then the question of how humans have the Qur'an in their possession follows quickly after.

[156] This raises the specter of whether or not a thought in the mind of the Deity that conceives creatures constitutes their "otherness." Looking at this from the creaturely side of things, the obvious answer is no since many things can be imagined by humans, but this imagining does not make the things or persons so imagined true "others."

Is not all of this strikingly similar to the way humans relate to other humans or even to themselves in the sense of "internal dialogue?" When a human speaks, she conveys something of who she is while addressing another with other words that can guide or direct the other's attention.[157] Similarly, Allah's Speech expresses something of who He is while also providing guidance. Due to humanity's finite nature, humans always speak in ways that lack total precision in conveying the whole truth about that to which they refer. Thus, any human utterance partially represents the human speaker and partially dissembles the speaker.[158] Of course, with Allah, it would not be the case that He has any weakness that would prevent Him from communicating what He intends. Instead, Allah's infinite wisdom guides how much to reveal to humanity either in terms of guidance or of disclosing Himself. A human knows that she is an existent and that there is speech around her other than what represents her, whether this is internal dialogue or speech from others. The point of all this is that the human capacity for internal dialogue (i.e., self-relating) or relating with others by means of speech is a necessary conceptual foundation to think on and proclaim that Allah's Speech (Qur'an) is eternal with Him. Said differently, human internal dialogue or dialogue with other humans is an analogy by which to understand the way Allah and the Qur'an relate. How humans relate to their own speech provides the surest ground for properly understanding Allah's relationship to His Speech.

This analytical response to Allah's "utter otherness," or radical transcendence, closes with an observation about otherness. What was argued formerly about the Qur'an addressing "potential creatures" as substantial "others" has been largely refused by the great Muslim thinker

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[157] Although promoting that this is much like how humans exist, act, and think, such an anthropology presents a serious bifurcation between who someone is and what he or she does and speaks (speech-acts). I do not necessary endorse such an inner psycheic understanding while conceding that it does account for humanity's finite nature significantly. Luke 6:45 finds a tighter connection between who someone is and what they do/speak.

[158] The capacity to properly represent what is intended is a skill that can be developed. *Humanus absconditus* does not have to occur.

Al-Ghazālī.[159] For Al-Ghazālī, under the compelling influence of *Tawḥīd*, the logic of Islam inevitably leans in the direction that creation is illusory and only the One is real.[160] Nevertheless, the co-eternality of Allah and the Qur'an, and the apparent distinction between them, is worth deeply considering: how can a human understand this if not by the analogy of his own experience of internal dialogue or by interpersonal speech that does not strictly represent him?

Let us offer a final word on apophaticism. An apophatic ingredient is always warranted in understanding the Deity. This ingredient protects the Deity from being robbed of His transcendence. Cataphatic theology must complement apophatic theology or else the end result is an agnosticism that can shade into atheism. Both are necessary in getting to know the Deity. Thomas Torrance says it well:

> We may not forget, however, that the Mystery of God sets limits to the reciprocity which he establishes between us, and thereby sets boundaries to our knowledge of him, which interdicts the projection of our human subjectivities and creaturely relations into him. Thus while God appropriates our human words and conceptions, along with their anthropomorphic elements embedded in them, and uses them in the mediating of his reconciling revelation to us, he nevertheless remains transcendent over them all and makes his Truth marvelously to shine through them at the same time, and thereby reveals himself to us in spite of the infinite difference between the creature and Creator.[161]

This applies readily enough to Islam by modifying the phrase, "reveals himself to us," to "reveals his will to us" although the prior comments about knowing Allah's attributes/names indicates that, to some extent, Allah makes Himself known in revelation.

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[159] Al-Ghazali, *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, vol. 6, bk. 36. "God does indeed love them [people], but in reality He loves nothing other than Himself, in the sense that He is the totality [of being], and there is nothing in being apart from Him."

[160] Gibb, *Mohammedanism*, 55. Surah 28:88 records, "And cry not unto any other god along with Allah. There is no Allah save Him. Everything will perish save His countenance. His is the command, and unto Him ye will be brought back."

[161] Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 106 – 107.

Anthropology, Society, and the Deity

Every human has been born into human relatedness — except Adam as addressed in an

earlier footnote. Every human is born into a divine-human relationship. These points are obvious

according to both Islam and Christianity. Each human person intuitively knows the three things

assumed in this work: that she is related, distinct, and in oneness to — or in union with — other

humans.[162] Relatedness is being associated with others, and it is initially a consequence of being

born. In other words, it is constitutive of human nature or what it means to be human. Human

families form their structure in terms of human relatives, and no one has ever been without

relatives (except Adam initially).[163] Oneness, though, is seen even in the primordial case of

Adam because Adam carried Eve biologically in Himself, as foreknown by the Deity ("Eve is

Ḥauwa in Islam; the Hebrew is *Ḥavvah* or *Ḥawwah*).[164] The Deity, as omniscient and

Rabb/*Kupios*/*Adonai* of all stands over all time as well.[165] Whatever one's stance, whether the

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[162] For an excellent discussion on the human identity in view of secular viewpoints analyzed under the light of theology, see Wolfhart Pannenberg's work. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (1985; Edinburgh: T&T Clark LTD, 1999); Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 96. Bell's term, "social person" capitalizes the embodied nature of being human as always first a "you" for an "I": the social human is a "complex and irreducible phenomena." Tamim Al-Barghouti, *The Umma and the Dawla: The Nation-State and the Arab Middle East* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 38 – 39. The Islamic idea of the transcultural nature of the *'Umma* similarly points in the direction of a human always being in some oneness with others. Al-Barghouti states that the very idea of the *'umma* is tied to the collective pursuing the *imam* ("guide"). On both Christian and Islamic cosmological origins, the human person is always a "you" to the Deity before the human is an "I" to self. This is also the case with a child, who is always "you" or "him/her" to parents before an "I" to self. For an erudite discussion on how anthropological categories relate to theology, Douglas Davies' work is concise and broad. Douglas Davies, *Anthropology and Theology* (Oxford: Berg, an imprint of Oxford International Publishers Ltd., 2002), 29 – 24 and 45; F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 99 – 105; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought* (Albany: State University of New York, 1981), 7 – 9 and 39 – 54.

[163] Someone may object the orphans are examples of persons without relatives. This is only an apparent difficulty since an orphan still belongs to a generational tree, with or without personally knowing these family members.

[164] The Qur'an does not interdict the account in the Torah, but is more ambiguous on the process of Eve's creation: Surah Al-Aʿrāf 7:189 and Surah An-Nisāʾ 4:1. Eve was still derived from Adam.

[165] There are at least four ways to understand the Deity's relationship to time: sempiternal, transcendent over but engaged in, temporal, and transcendently timeless. Classical theology in both Islam and Christianity stands, with divergences noted, closest to transcendently timeless. However one goes, the transcendent superiority of the Deity over time remains, and this seems to be true even in positions that take the Deity to have always been

Deity predestines what He knows or only foreknows what will be, He is not ignorant of what He will do, of how He will bring Eve into existence: through Adam.[166] Hence, in the protological creation of Adam is the kernel of all human relatedness, both in terms of the human-divine relationship and in the human-human relationship that will obtain when Eve is eventually taken from Adam. Human persons, wherever they are in the generational chain of life, are always constituted together with others.

This point is reminiscent of the comments made earlier on human-onto-relations (in "Fields of Direct Relevance"). To recall, human relating, or human intersubjectivity, can be accurately retitled "human-onto-relations." This is because the shear reality of all human existence occurs in a context of human relationships that influences who or what a human being is and becomes. Thus, such relating is connected to human ontology, or human nature, because this relating *contributes* to the constitution of each human being. No human being is who he is apart from his relationships. With this said, the "inter-" on "intersubjectivity" is to be stressed. Distinctness of human persons entails separateness as well. There is something unique in the embodiment of each human identity. Cain, for instance, carried in himself the biological genes of Adam and Eve: flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. However, Cain was not identical to his parents, which is clear because they were separate from one another, among other distinctives like actions and choices. For every son or daughter, therefore, there is a biological union that obtains within him/her of their parents, but this does not make them precisely like their parents,

conditioned by time (temporal). William Lane Craig and Quentin Smith, *Theism, Atheism, and Big Bang Cosmology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); William Lane Craig, *Time and Eternity: Exploring God's Relationship to Time* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001); Garrett DeWeese, *God and the Nature of Time* (Hampshire UK: Ashgate, 2004); William Haskar*, God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989); Alan Padgett, *God, Eternity and the Nature of Time*, rep. (London: Wipf and Stock, 2000).

[166] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 142. "As offspring of human nature, we are not 'other' in an absolute sense; neither are we free. If we attribute either ἀρχη or 'cause' to a person, Adam, we acquire otherness in unity."

either in acts or in biochemical composition. In Islamic or Christian theism, there is always a

metaphysical component or aspect in all human identity as well (e.g., soul or spirit).[167] Said

differently, there is always sameness and disparity between oneself and one's parents — like an

analogy. Echoing Vanhoozer's earlier work on identity, sameness and disparity in this biological

relation between parents and children makes a place for both *idem*-identity and *ipse*-identity.

Idem-identity shows the sameness between a parent and child; *ipse*-idenity makes room for

disparity between a child and parent by the child's action to uphold or undermine his speech,

contributing to what is unique to his identity.

It must, again, be emphatically noted that human beings' "distinctness" from one another

takes as a defining feature "separateness." This will become important in chapter four during the

discussion of the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity. These comments on "biological oneness" and

"distinctness entailing separateness" are apparently undeniable of every son or daughter. The

adverb "apparently" is added in order to avoid stacking the deck against potential Islamic

doctrine(s) of creation (cf. chap. 3). It has already been seen that Al-Ghazālī understood creation

as illusory, which requires the denial of any real "separateness" since all are claimed to be One.

Experientially, however, each human being understands himself to be separate from other human

beings except for the biological union already noted.

There is another type of oneness that needs explained to capture how humans experience

their relationships with others. It is "human cognitive oneness," but it needs to be carefully

defined. Human cognitive oneness is mutual understanding, a syncing of thought so as to achieve

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[167] This is a repudiation of materialistic reductions of the human personality. Following both Hart's insight in the footnote below and that advice of Alvin Plantinga above, Christianity and Islam should flatly reject those secular or "kuhr" (unbelieving) categories that takes as its ground the rejection of revelation and the supposition that the cosmos and, so the human person, are to be understood non-theistically. "Metaphysical" could be replaced with "spiritual" above if adequately qualified.

more or less mimesis of thought between two human beings (or more). There is not a monist

framework underlying human cognitive oneness as this phrase is used at this point. Such may be

called for in later chapters depending on how a doctrine of creation is configured in Islam or

Chritianity. For now, however, human cognitive oneness indicates the ability humans possess to

recognize another separate person, receive communication, and appropriate this other human

person's expressed thought as his own. Hence, it is experientially plain that each human person

is separate from another, but separateness does not preclude taking another human's expressed

thought as one's own. Cognitive oneness between humans *contributes* to an individualized

human identity, but not by some monist or metaphysical mind-meld. Instead, human cognitive

oneness between humans *contributes* by way of appropriating another's thought as one's own.

This occurs constantly in today's world, and it is probably most vividly and pervasively

portrayed in advertising and marketing. Humans communicating (relating) with one another must

decide about how much influence to take from others, whether more or less. Any human being's

thought communicated influences how others think, and, reciprocally, this person has influence

from others occurring to him.[168] What is envisaged is a clearer recognition of the interconnection

between the categories of anthropology (as isolate individual) and society. Human experience

always entails intersubjectivity, so discussion about this reality must ever link the individual to

society and the society to individual. These categories, i.e., society and the individual, reflect

reality more properly if presented as intersubjective, reciprocating categories. In short, there "is

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[168] John Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan, rep. (2006; London: T & T Clark, 2009), 9. This book builds on this idea of the interpenetrating nature (or intersubjective) of communion and otherness as constitutive of humanity's personhood. He points to the Trinity as the only way to "arrive at this notion of personhood: the Father cannot be conceived for a single moment without the Son and the Spirit, and the same applies to the other two persons in their relation with the Father and with each other."

no such thing as a societiless individual."[169] The forming of an individual human identity takes

as an integral aspect the influence of society, or the influences from others.[170] No baby could

dare to suppose otherwise. Human cognitive oneness is communication realized, with stressed

laid upon the human ability to appropriate others' expressed thoughts. Once someone

appropriates another's expressed thought, she will act in certain manners attuned to, more or less,

this thinking. By action or speech-acts, she diplays and constructs her disposition (or who she is:

i.e., *ipse*-identity). Thus, human cognitive oneness brings this discussion back to the earlier idea

of "human-onto-relations." Appropriating another's thought leads to action, and "action is the

proof of disposition."[171] By reoccurrence of thinking, speech-action, and action, the nature of

one's identity is formed. Hence, the humans to whom someone relates affects that person's

nature, more or less depending on the degree of influence and the appropriation (or acceptance)

of that influence. Thus, it is evident that someone's expressed thought can be part of forming

another person's nature by appropriation, recurrence of thinking such appropriated thought, and

performance of that appropriated thought day to day. This process is represented well by the

phrase "human-onto-relations."

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[169] Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes in the Qur'an*, 2nd Ed. (1980; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 37; Stanley Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 2001), 304.

[170] David Bentley Hart. *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, 170 – 171. Kindle. Hart, quoting and then commenting on Nicholas Lash, states: "Lash . . . recommends instead the Augustinian category of "subsistent relations": "we have relationships," he writes, "God is the relations that he has. . . . God, we might say, is relationships without remainder, which we, most certainly, are not." [Hart says] "As theology this is sound enough (though I entertain considerable doubts regarding its value as anthropology); . . . should not the Trinity be made the starting point for a theological assault on the modern notion of person? Or for a more "constitutive" account of relationality within human identity? . . . Is not even our "purest" recommends instead the Augustinian category of "subsistent relations": "we have relationships," he writes, "God is the relations that he has. . . . God, we might say, is relationships without remainder, which we, most certainly, are not." [Hart says] "As theology this is sound enough (though I entertain considerable doubts regarding its value as anthropology); . . . should not the Trinity be made the starting point for a theological assault on the modern notion of person? Or for a more "constitutive" account of relationality within human identity? . . . Is not even our "purest" interiority reflexive, knowing and loving itself as expression and recognition . . . ." In this regard, the present work represents a continuation of that theological assault. Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God: A Reading of the Apostle's Creed* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame Press, 1993), 31 – 32.

[171] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 30.6*.

The three categories of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness capture what is epistemically and intuitively obvious for every human person. It may be alleged that these catergories are a case of arguing to my "Christian" presuppositions, namely, towards the Trinity as the better explanation of this evidence, expounded in *these* categories. Two responses are in order. First, should there be a better formulation of these categories or terminological formulae that portray human experience in relationships more accurately, then what was just laid out could be reconfigured on the basis of such. These categories are derived from what appears obviously true of human relational experience, not from a doctrine of the Trinity or, for that matter, from a doctrine of Allah. Secondly, human relationships exist in ways dissimilar to the Trinity: "distinctness as separateness" is an obvious instance. Moreover, human cognitive oneness also presupposes separateness, which likewise dissembles the Trinity.

Moving forward then, the person who denies the intuitive epistemic reality that he is distinct from others, related to others, and is influenced by others (human cognitive oneness) should be asked how he goes about living a single day of life without experiencing these three things. The absurdity of denying these categories is seen by the shear fact that whoever reads this right now must assume the three categories; for the reader is related to me, distinct and separate from me, and either appropriating or denying my thought, that is, allowing or refusing human cognitive oneness.[172]

Hypostasis and Perichōrēsis

In the last section, the contours of human relationships were argued to be human biological oneness and cognitive oneness, distinctness entailing separateness, and relatedness.

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[172] This section does not impugn necessarily a worldview that sees all things as illusory or only some manifestation. This, however, would be an ontological explanation behind humans' immediate epistemic situation and reality. The addition of "epistemic" and "epistemically" above means to accentuate the utter realness of these categories to the human mind on a day-in-day-out basis.

These categories were drawn-up for the purpose of clarifying the evidence, namely, that human

relationships exist and are inescapable. The categories help to unpack what it means to say

"human relationships exist." Further, the inescapability of the categories indicates that they are

constitutive of human relationality. As such, these categories will be applied to the Islamic

doctrine of Allah and the Christian doctrine of God to observe how the pressure of a respective

theology proper reconfigures the meanings of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness.

This section presents the terminology necessary to discuss these categories in regard to

the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.When speaking about the Trinity, the celebrated

"Cappadocian compromise" is usually referred to: *mia ousia*, *treis Hypostaseis*.[173] This is the

preferred Greek formulation, which in Latin is *una substantia*, *tres Personae*.[174] Although both

prosōpos and *hypostasis* are briefly qualified, *Hypostasis* is given preference due to its

foreignness to the modern ear that has become so familiar with "person." *Hypostasis*'

unfamiliarity allows that it be taken in its own right.[175] This is not to say that *prosōpos* is

deficient; that it is a loaded term both by its frequency of use and because of modernity's

(Cartesian isolated self) conceptions creates complications.[176] In what follows, the connotations

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[173] One of the earliest writing of the formula: Gregory Nazianzen, "Oration 21, On the Great Athanasius," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, Vol. VII, *S. Cyril of Jerusalem & S. Gregory of Nazianzen* (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1894), ch. XXXV. Logos Bible Software, electronic. "We use in an orthodox sense the terms one Essence [*ousia*] and three hypostases, the one to denote the nature of the Godhead, the other the properties of the three . . . ."

[174] The Latin Fathers can also speak of *una esse*, *tres substantiae*, "one essence, three substances," where "substances" takes on what later will be specified "subsistencies," that particular subsistence unifed in *esse*. Augustine: *De Trinitate*, bk. 5, chap. 8 – 9. Kindle.

[175] This is a dangerous task indeed, per St. Augustine: "They indeed use also the word hypostasis; but they intend to put a difference, I know not what, between ousia and hypostasis: so that most of ourselves who treat these things in Greek language, are accustomed to say, mian ousian, treis hupostaseis or in Latin, one essence, three substances." *De Trinitate*, bk. 5, chap. 8. Kindle.

[176] Rahner, *The Trinity*, 106. He says, ". . . when today we speak of person in the plural, we think almost necessarily, because of the modern meaning of the word, of several spiritual centers of activity, of several subjectivities and liberties. . . . And there is properly no mutual love between Father and Son, for this would presuppose two acts."

of both *Prosōpos* and *Hypostasis* will be explained, then these connotations will be joined to *Hypostasis*, delimiting its meaning for the Trinity. The aim is to set forth what is meant by these terms but not to give justifications for each connotation committed to *Hypostasis/Hypostaseis* — the space needed for this would be immense.

Karl Rahner rightly notes that "person" should be taken in Trinitarian formulation as that which distinguishes.[177] "Person" should not be understood as isolated "self" or as a self-subsisting center of consciousness.[178] Neither should "person" conjure the creaturely assumption that for more than one person necessarily requires separate natures — as with humans.[179] Nicolas of Cusa famously coined, "'Not other" is not "same"" and "'not-same' is 'not other.'"[180] Otherness or distinction is a connotation deposited to *Hypostasis* that is conceivable only as otherness without separateness. Maximus the Confessor discussed "difference" as an essential feature of all things existing, but he also describes "division" (*diairesis*) as an evil perversion of "difference" (*diaphora*).[181] Thus, the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity are different from One Another,

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David Bentley Hart disagrees with Rahner: "For Pavel Florensky the language of divine persons — and here he strikes a vein far richer, and far more faithful to the "economic" Trinitarian dynamism of atonement, than that represented by the mere exclusion of a reciprocal Thou from the thought of God — is one of self-oblation, according to which each "I" in God is also "not I" but rather Thou; for the divine circumincession is always a relationality of "self"-renunciation in favor of — an opening out to — the other. It is thus that God in himself is, as Hilary was fond of observing, never solitary. One might even say that, in God, divine "substantiality" is the "effect" of this distance of address and response, this event of love that is personal by being prior to every self, this gift of self-offering that has already been made before any self can stand apart, individual, isolate; God is as the differing modalities of replete love (to speak like Richard of St. Victor), whose relatedness is his substance." Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 171. Kindle.

[177] Rahner, *Trinity*, 27.

[178] Ibid., 106.

[179] Ibid., 105.

[180] Nicholas of Cusa, "Cribratio Alkorani," *in Nicholas of Cusa's De pace fidei and Cribratio Alkorani*, trans. Jasper Hopkins (Minneapolis: Banning, 1994), 107. At first hearing, this sounds like nonsense or contradictory, but the nature of the Persons of the Godhead as One can be explained dialectically, or it can be explained by a group of analogies although it must be emphasized that each analogy independent of the others can only go so far in explaining the Trinity.

[181] Maximus the Confessor, *Epistle 12*.

but difference neither entails "division" nor is the "separateness" contained in the "distinctness" of humans descriptive of the divine *Hypostaseis*. The divine *ousia* (nature) is definitive of what is the same among the divine *Hypostaseis* while the *Hypostaseis* are how the nature subsists. The distinctives of the *Hypostaseis* are often called "properties." It is essential that these properties be understood in terms of how rather than what. John Zizioulas explains while commenting on Maximus the Confessor:

> Maximus uses for that purpose [developing an ontology on the basis of how (*hypostasis*) along side an ontology of what (*physis*)] a distinction between *logos* and *tropos*: in every being there is a permanent and unchangeable aspect and an adjustable one. In the Incarnation, the *logos physeos* remains fixed, but the *tropos* adjusts being to an intention or purpose or manner of communion. In other words, the love of God bridges the gulf of otherness by affecting the changeable and adjustable aspect of being, and this applies equally to God and to the world: God bridges the gulf by adjusting his own *tropos*, that is, the *how he is* . . . . This amounts to a 'tropic identity', that is, to an ontology of *tropos*, of the 'how' things are. This *is* a matter of ontology, becaue the *tropos* of being is an inseparable aspect of being, as primary ontologically as substance or nature.[182]

Thus, the *Hypostaseis* connotes *how* the Father, the Son, and the Spirit subsist. The properties differentiating the *Hypostaseis* apply to *how* They subsist, and they do not divide or separate the divine *Hypostaseis*. They only, instead, differentiate Them. *Homoousia* guarantees the identity of nature (what: *physis*/*ousia*) among the divine *Hypostaseis*. The term *enhypostasis* clarifies the way the *Hypostaseis* are related to One Another, namely, as several *Hypostaseis* in Each Other: *enhypostasis* is a term for speaking severally of the indivisible *Hypostaseis* of the Father, Son, and Spirit with the recognition that speaking severally of Them includes the Others.[183] The idea that the Trinity is a federation of three independent centers of consciousness should be rejected,

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[182] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 24 – 25; Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua* 1, 5, and 67. Maximus uses the Greek phrasing of τροπος ὑπαξεως (*tropos hypaxeōs*: mode of existence) and πως εἰναι (*pōs einai*: how being exists) to explain.

[183] St. John of Damascus, *The Philosophical Chapters*, chap. 44. *Enhypostasis* speaks, in the second way St. John lays it out, to the mutual indwelling of the *hypostaseis* of the Trinity, and not to one *hypostasis* subsisting in a more substantial under *hypostaseis*.

but the biblical portrayal of the *Hypostaseis* as altogether lively and dynamic should be retained.[184] The added term, *perichōrēsis*, elaborates *enhypostasis* further, indicating dynamism and the full interpenetration of the *Hypostaseis* among One Another — "coinherence" can be used to show the repose in *perichōrēsis* and rightly represents it as well.[185] The verbal form is *perichōreō*, and it means "to interpenetrate." *Perichōrēsis* clarifies the enhypostatic "indwelling" of Each of the *Hypostaseis*. It specifies that None of the *Hypostaseis* are taken as more ontologically substantial in terms of *ousia*/*physis*/nature. The *Hypostaseis* are not to be thought of in terms of "layers" with the misconception that the Father is the "ground level" in whom the Son and Spirit subsist.[186] Rather, each *Hypostasis* fully indwells the other two *Hypostasesis*. *Perichōrēsis* is a vital term for indicating that the mutual indwelling among the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity is "full," that is, this term indicates that there in no uncommon "divine space" among the *Hypostaseis*. Therefore, *Hypostasis* cannot connote "isolate" or "solitary" but, instead, always entails a circumscription regarding the Father, Son, or Spirit, so coextensive with the Others that He (*Hypostasis* in view) can rightly be said to already always entail the Others, and thereby undermine conceptions of individual selves. More poetically, the *Hypostaseis* together are a resounding plentitude of voice, voiced, and intonation, harmoniously "echoing" by a creative elaboration as re-voicing — to adapt a Trintarian analogy of my own.[187] The effect of

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[184] Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 171.

[185] The Latin terminological tradition will go on to highlight dynamism or repose by use of the terms *circuminsession* and *circumincession*, respectively.

[186] This does not deny that the Father is rightly discussed as the unoriginate cause of the *ousia* or the Son and Spirit, but it does state that no temporality can qualify these causal relationships: therefore, there was not a time when the Son (or Spirit) was not.

[187] The use of "circumscription" here is not designed to "totalize" conceptualization of God, or of the *Hypostaseis*, as though He is some totality to be known as a whole. But "circumscription" points to what is particular of each of the *Hypostaseis*, that is, in classical theological terms, each *Hypostasis* has properties that are proper to only that Person, which are incommunicable to the other two *Hypostaseis*. Yet "properties" is not to be understood in a philosophical sense of "properties" belonging to each *Hypostasis*. Instead, it is the plentitudinal fullness of the particularity of each Hypostasis, communally expressed among the dynamic relationships that is God.

Hypostaseis/enhypostasis, in this way, ushers in *perichōrēsis* necessarily, as Gregory of Nyssa taught so long ago: "This then is the hypostasis, or "*understanding*;" not the indefinite conception of the essence or substance, which, because what is signified is general, finds no "*standing*," but the conception which by means of the expressed peculiarities gives *standing* and circumscription to the general and uncircumscribed."[188] Joseph Lienhard opts to translate "standing" as "restricts" and Anna Silvas uses "gives stability."[189] The verb suggests a "presencing" by the particular attendance of someone, that is, by the mode of being/nature (how) of that specific person. *Hypostasis* ends up connoting enhypostatic and perichoretic meanings to present what is intimated in biblical-concrete scriptural language, like "in the bosom of the Father" or especially the High Priestly prayer (John 17).[190] It is no surprise that Thomas Torrance speaks of *Hypostasis* and *perichōrēsis* together in one breath: " . . . we seek to formulate in forms of thought and speech the hypostatic, homoousial and perichoretic relations in the eternal dynamic Communion in love and being loved of the three Divine persons which God is."[191] The traditional way to understand the relationships of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is in their causal

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That is, *enhypostasis*, considered severally of the three *Hypostaseis*, always already is perichoretic in the "one divine space" (to use a spatial analogy) that is the divine *ousia* (being, nature). Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 9. "At the same time, each of these persons is so unique that their hypostatic or personal properties are totally incommunicable from one person to the other."

[188] Basil, Epistle 38, 3. This designation appears to largely have been revised to Gregory of Nyssa, Epistle 38, 3. The Greek of part of the text: Ἡ το κοινον τε και ἀπεριγραπτον ἐν τῳ τινι πραγματι δια των ἐπιφαινομενων ἰδιοματων παριστωσα και περιγραφουσα. And as noted in an above footnote, this particularity is not to be understood as "one substance in another," which is dangerously suggested by both "hypo," in hypostasis and "sub" in substance. Nor should it indicate particularities obtaining within an undergirding layer (sub/hypo) — this introduces a "fourth something" into the Trinity, a Quadrinity. The particularities consist in the relationships that so penetrate one another that no reference to one *hypostasis* does not bring with it *enhypostasis* and so *perichōrēsis*, so much so that the Father cannot be conceived apart from His mutual relationships with the Son, the Son apart from the Father, the Spirit apart from the Father, or the Spirit apart from the Son.

[189] Gregory of Nyssa, *The Letters*, trans., introduction, and commentary by Anna Silvas, SUPPLEMENTS TO VIGILIAE CHRISTIANAE, formerly titled PHILOSOPHIA PATRUM, Eds. J. Boeft, J. Oort, W. Petersen, D. Runia, J. Winden, C. Scholten, vol. 83 (Boston: Brill, 2007), 273; Joseph Lienhard, "Ousia and Hypostasis: The Cappadocian Settlement and the Theology of 'One Hypostasis'," in *The Trinity*, eds. Stephen Davis, Daniel Kendall, and Gerald O'Collins, rep. (1999; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 107.

[190] Matt. 11:26 – 27, 28:19, and John 10:38.

[191] Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 109.

relations. The Father is the unbegotten or the unoriginate, the Son the begotten, and the Spirit the

one who is sent by the Father through the Son in the name of the Son. These are descriptive

relationships of the Trinity, but to these can be added the faithfulness relationships inherent in

the Trinity. That is, the Son yields and responds to the Father, the Father promises to the Son, the

Spirit glorifies the Son, the Father keeps the Son in the power of His Spirit, and so forth.[192]

Hypostasis also connotes an objective otherness by and recognized of each several *Hypostaseis*,

but such "object other" is still homoousially and therefore unitarily one in nature. In other words,

the objective otherness owes to the hypostatic ontology of the Trinity (per Maximus and

Zizioulas earlier). This objective otherness does not threaten the oneness of the Trinity because

of *homoousia*. The unity of the Trinity owes to the homoousial oneness of the three *Hypostaseis'*

nature. The "recognition" of an "object other" is one qualified by love, explicated by the phrase,

"for this other one." This recognition and love is intrinsic to the mutual relationships, which is

the One God in Three *Hypostaseis*.

 Hypostasis handles the denotation of distinction in terms of the "mode of being" or the

"how of being." A reference to *Hypostasis* necessarily brings with it, in Trinitarian logic,

enhypostasis, *homoousion*, and *perichōrēsis* for the "one being" (*ousia*) is the three *Hypostaseis*,

who are enhypostatically related in dynamic coinherence, and gives places to (both logically and

historically) *perichōrēsis* as a needed explanatory conceptualization.[193] For satefy's sake,

although *Hypostasis* indicates a mode of being, modalism does not follow. The "modes of being"

are Each a distinctive *Hypostasis* and Each are perichoretically related Agents, who are

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[192] Kevin Vanhoozer, "Does the Trinity Belong to a Theology of Religions," in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 67.

[193] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 5. Zizioulas makes the point that it is the "who" question the Persons of the Trinity raise more than the "what" question. "Thirdly, and most significantly, otherness is not moral or psychological but *ontological*. We cannot tell *what* each person is; we can only say *who* he is."

homoousially one. The *Hypostasis* of the Father has His unique set of relational properties, the

Hypostasis of the Son has His set, and the *Hypostasis* of the Spirit has His set as well.

Ousia

Ousia (οὐσια; i.e., essence/being/nature) is much easier to handle once *Hypostasis* has been

set in place.[194] *Ousia* may be thought of generically as the existence and nature of an entity with

a certain set of "great-making" attributes. From this generalization, a short but crucial set of

attributes qualifies *ousia*:[195] omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, omnibenevolent,

immensity, eternality, necessity, incorporeality, simplicity, unity, immutability, and aseity.[196]

Some of these are debatable (like simplicity), and others of them need caveats to clarify them

(like immutability), and still others could be included (like infinite or relational). These concerns

and clarifications are important, but it is the "oneness" the term *ousia denotes* that now requires

attention. The term "divinity" is used herein as a shorthand way to speak of these attributes as a

whole whereas *ousia denotes* the unity (oneness) of God while speaking summarily of the other

attributes. In other words, *ousia* indicates all the attributes while also stressing unity. Of central

concern is the existence of an entity, who is "one," whose attributes constitutes what is meant by

"divinity." Any "one" who can have these attributes predicated of him is divine and rightly titled

"God." The *ousia* of the Triune God is both His existence and the essence of that existence. The

two (existence and essence) can be distinguished for analysis, but if "aseity" is attributable to

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[194] Gregory Nazianzen in some cases prefers to use *fusis* (φυσις) to speak of *ousia*.

[195] Specifically, moving from the "generic *ousia*" to the *ousia* qualified by the list that follows presents the distinctive Christian God of the Bible. Some of these attributes are derived directly from Scripture (e.g., immutabililty), others are only intimated in Scripture and need philosophical theological construction to reach their distinctive form (e.g., immensity).

[196] J. P. Moreland and William Craig, "The Coherence of Theism I" and "The Coherence of Theism II, in *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2003). This list is developed from those attributes listed in these two chapters. Predicating incorporeality and immutability of the *ousia*, rather than the *Hypostasis*, enables the *Hypostasis* of the Son to become corporeal (John 1:14) and adapt His "hypostatic identity" to include humanity when He was incarnated (and after) without creating contradictions for these attributes.

God, existence and essence cannot be different, as Thomas Aquinas demonstrated in his *Summa Theologica*.[197] In short, *ousia* is indicative of God's "godness" or divinity, with a special accentuation on oneness. *Ousia* is proper to each the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, not as three separate *ousiai* that are the same, but as one *ousia* wholly and common to all Three.[198] With such an assertion, there is a demand for answering the question of, "How so?" Briefly touched upon in the last section, it is *homoousia* (or *homoousion*) that makes such an assertion feasible. The term means "same-nature," and it makes possible the claim that the Three are one and the same nature. The Three are not one and the same nature by means of composition, but the *ousia* is proper of Each of the Three in the same perfect plentitude. This sounds cryptic, but recalling that *Hypostasis* entails the enhypostatic relation of the Three *Hypostaseis* in perfect perichoretic fullness explains the way Each *Hypostasis* is fully the *ousia*, and not part of a composition that, when combined, "builds" the *ousia*. Thus, the *ousia* is the one LORD God, not as adding a "fourth thing" or supposing the *ousia* to be more foundational to divinity. Instead, the term *ousia* refers to what is common to all three *Hypostaseis*, so *ousia* is never impersonal in actuality. To refer to *ousia* is to refer to how God is only one LORD God. Since each of the *Hypostaseis* are the same nature, They are one: They are homoousial. Because each One perfectly (fully) and perichoretically (not confused) indwells the Others so that One is never who He is apart from the other Two, They are completely one in nature or *ousia*.

Ousia emphasizes the unity of God, His oneness, and the way the Father, Son, and Spirit are homoousial with One Another. Thus, it is evident that *ousia* also connotes relationships;[199] God

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[197] Aquinas, *Summa*, I, Q. 3, art. 4.

[198] St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, bk. 1, chap. 10.

[199] Aloys Grillmeier discusses terminological matters during the first four centuries of the church cogently. "Part Two: The First Theological Interpretations of the Person of Christ, From Origen to Ephesus (431)," in Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, trans. John Bowden, vol. 1 *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon*, rev. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975).

is relationships without remainder.[200] Commenting on Athanasius, Thomas Torrence writes:

> . . . *ousia* refers to the Being of God in the inner reality and unity of his coinherent Trinitarian relations. . . . for the three divine Persons are inseparably interrelated in being and act through mutual indwelling and a mutual movement toward and for one another in the homoousial Communion of the Holy Trinity which They constitute.[201]

To avoid an unduly static and lifeless conceptualization of *ousia*, the persons-in-relating quality of the *Hypostaseis*, demanded by scriptural revelation (esp. John 14 – 17), bear on God's *ousia* so that conceptualizing *ousia* brings to mind the *Hypostaseis* that constitute God's *ousia*.[202] Conversely, *ousia* bears equally on the conception of the *Hypostaseis* in community. This is summarized nicely by a notion put forth by James Torrance: God is "Being-in-Communion."[203] The *ousia theou* ("nature of God") is fellowship-creating towards creation (economically conceived) and so, antecedently, is eternally-fellowship-constitution before all creation

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[200] Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God,* 21.

[201] Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 130.

[202] Gregory Nazianzen, "Oration XL," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ch. XLI. Logos Bible Software. Gregory the Theologian says it best: ". . . the infinite conjunction of Three Infinite Ones, Each God when considered in Himself; as the Father so the Son, as the Son so the Holy Ghost; the Three One God when contemplated together; Each God because Consubstantial; One God because of the Monarchia. No sooner do I conceive of the One than I am illumined by the Splendour of the Three; no sooner do I distinguish Them than I am carried back to the One. When I think of any One of the Three I think of Him as the Whole, and my eyes are filled, and the greater part of what I am thinking escapes me." The idea of any monarchy — in terms of the Father as the *Fons Divitatis* — in the Godhead has a certain attraction to it in that it represents the economic revelation of the Triune relationships better than any idea that the Son and Spirit go about "commanding" the Father. There are no cases of the Spirit ever being said to command the Father and only two instances of Jesus commanding the Father. Scott Horrell makes this point particularly well: "While *ekporeuetai* seems most properly to indicate the sending forth of the Spirit to believers by the Father, it was extrapolated as scriptural language to fit a larger pattern of Spirit-Father-Son relatedness. The Spirit is always going forth from the Father, as well as being promised, sent, or breathed out by the Son (15:26; 16:7; cf. 14:26). Very well, some may argue, but all this evidence merely speaks of the economic Godhead. My point is that no texts indicate any other trinitarian order, for example, the Father being sent by the Son. God the Father repeatedly is presented as *the fons divinitatis*, the divine source from which all else flows in the history of the world and, evidently, within the trinitarian activities as a whole." Horrell,"Chapter 2: The Eternal Son of God," in *Jesus in Trinitarian*, 64.

[203] James Torrance, "Contemplating the Trinitarian Mystery of Christ," in *Alive to God: Studies in Spirituality, Presented to James Houston*, eds. J. I. Packer and L. Wilkinson (Downers Grove: 1992), 14; James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, & the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 72 – 73.

(immanently conceived): the "Being [is] . . . as ever-living ever-dynamic Communion (κοινωνία)."[204] God is not undifferentiated but differentiated, and the *Hypostaseis* are not a loose federation of gods but a homoousial communion of differentiation as one LORD God. *Ousia* is comprised by a triunity of internally interpenetrating, enhypostastically coinhering, and perichoretic relationships *ad extra*.[205] The attributes of divinity, proper to all three *Hypostaseis*, are connoted by the term *ousia*, with the central denotation being unity, oneness, or "one being." When dealing with the Christian doctrine of the *ousia* of God, *homoousia* must take center stage, or tritheism inevitably follows.

<center>*Tawḥīd* and the Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names</center>

Islam places central importance on the term, *Tawḥīd*. Simply, it means "one," "oneness" or "unity." This term indicates more than this, but, first, some issues pertaining to the "ninety-nine names of Allah" need revisited. These names, more or less of them, confer meaning about the Allah's attributes.[206] By extension, they signify something about Allah.[207] Many of them

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[204] Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 124. Athanasius, *Against Arian*, bk. 1, ch. 9, 29. ". . . The Son, not being a work, but proper to the Father's essence, always is; for, whereas the Father always is, so what is proper to his essence must always be; and this is his Word and his Wisdom. . . . For the offspring not to be ever with the Father is a disparagement of the perfection of his essence." Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 5.

[205] Ibid., 125; Hart, *Beauty of the Infinite*, 159. This is not a denial of the incommunicable properties typically discussed regarding the Being of God because these are certainly important but all of the incommunicable properties can be summarized, for the purposes here, under "divinity" (like Gregory the Theologian sometimes does). The attributes point to the equality and "Godness" of each of the *Hypostaseis* and the "Being-in-Communion" sets the essential differentiation of the indivisible Being, which has these "attributes" predicated of it. "*Ad extra*" as used here signifies "to the extreme edges of God." This relies on a spatial conception, but the point is that all the "space" the Father is in as God, so likewise is the Son in the exact same space as God, and the Spirit is also in that space as God. "*Ad extra*" can sometimes signify "to the outside" in the sense of God's action "towards creation" or "economically."

[206] The "attributes" of Allah and how they relate to Him have been debated with great fever since the seventh and eighth centuries. The groups involved can roughly be summarized into three: the Mu'tazilites, Ḥanbalites, and the Ash'arites. Nader El-Bizri discussion lays out the thought-frameworks for each of these groups' approach to the attributes. Nader El-Bizri, "God," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 121 – 122. El-Bizri first sentence (on pg. 121) intimates the inherent problem Islam has with regard to Allah's transcendence: "The question of God's essence (*dhāt*) and attributes (*ṣifāt*) confronted Muslims scholars with perplexing paradoxes touching on the divine unity (*Tawḥīd*) and transcendence (*tanzīh*)."

[207] Ibid., 122. El-Bizri writes, "Given that the Qur'an (as God's Word) mentions the divine attributes in conjunction with His "most beautiful names" (*asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā*), one could easily assert that this entails an

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require the analogy of human relationships to retain the meaning they signify regarding Allah. Looking to the "beautiful names" to help understand Allah also means, implicitly, looking to the human relationships entailed and required in the descriptions that the "names" denote or connote.[208] It is in this regard that human relationships as analogical means enable the "names" to be understood, which, in turn, makes possible understanding Allah. Furthermore, the "names" are Qur'anic revelation, which means the "ninety-nine beautiful names" are divinely sanctioned analogies since the Qur'an is Allah's Speech. To refuse this means of understanding leaves one in the realm of *ta'ṭīl*, edging towards the abyss of agnosticism. Islam has a doctrine of creation — or more rightly, doctrines of creation — that describe the Allah-world relationship.[209] In it is the teaching that man is Caliph (*Khalifa*), a vice-regent, which would be hard to understand if man were not in some way related to Allah analogically.[210] Allah would be Regent and humanity vice-regent, which seems to strongly suggest some type of analogy between how humanity

affirmation of the ontological reality of these attributes. However, this will require a particular method of reading the Qur'an that affirms the attributes without undermining transcendence and unity, or implying anthropomorphism. Inevitably, one wonders how successfully anthropomorphism can be avoided when accounting for verses like "your Lord's Face ever remains" (55:27), or "I created with My own hands" (38:75). In addition, it is hardly evident how the multiplicity which is implied by any affirmation of the attributes might be reconciled with the idea of God's absolute unity.

[208] Rahman, *Themes of Qur'an*, 1. ". . . but, as we shall soon see, orderly creativity, sustenance, guidance, justice, and mercy fully interpenetrate in the Qur'ānic concept of God as an organic unity. Since all these are *relational* ideas, we shall have to speak of God a great deal in the following pages" [Emphasis mine].

[209] David Burrell finds Islam's affirmation of *Tawḥīd* as an intractable difficulty for a doctrine of creation. ". . . [F]or the very drive to unity which human reason displays has not proved able, of itself, to attain the celebrated "distinction" which *Tawḥīd* and its corollary, creation demand. . . . that same distinction will turn out to defy proper conceptualization, as the various attempts to adapt the categories of human speculation will testify, so there will be no one Muslim account of creation. And the burden of this chapter will be to show that there can be no fully adequate account, so the plurality of accounts is less a sign of the inadequacy of Muslims thinkers to their task than it is of their fidelity to the founding revelation of their tradition: to *Tawḥīd* and its corollary, creation. . . . everything which is not God comes forth from God yet cannot exist without God, so how are they distinct when they cannot be separated. If God is eternal and everything else temporal, how does the act of creating bridge that chasm? If God alone properly exists, and everything else exists by an existence derived from divine existence, how real are the things we know? And the clincher: if God makes everything else to be, including human actions how can our actions be properly our own? David B. Burrell CSC, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion toClassical Islamic*, 142.

[210] Nasr, *Islamic Life*, 16 – 17. Nasr affirms that man is made in the image of God, but this appears to be the minority position. "Humans are, according to the Islamic perspective, crated in the 'image of God' and are also God's vicegerents (*khalīfah*) on earth. . . . Man as the theophany of the Divine Names and Qualities, or as the 'image of God', participates in both this freedom and necessity."

relates to creation and how Allah relates to creation.[211]

Tawḥīd is direly important to Islam's perception of Allah: no evidence making a better case than Tawḥīd's constitutive role in the first phrase of Shahadah, even coming before Muhammad's mention.[212] The Shahadah is the clearest statement about Allah's uniqueness as Deity alone. Ghamidi notes that Tawḥīd is the most important of the attributes of perfection.[213] Not only does Tawḥīd appear early on in the Qur'an (Surah 37:4), but it effectively closes Allah's revelation to man (Surah 112; only two Surahs follow). Although Muslims hold great reservations about the human ability to know Allah through His attributes, Tawḥīd is positively known.[214] Tawḥīd is not only an abstract affirmation but one that is directly applied to worship and the formation of the Umma (Islamic community).[215] The whole of Islam rides directly on Allah's Tawḥīd, and all that the din (religion) of Islam represents derives from Tawḥīd.[216] According to Islam, all pure monotheisms existing before Islam — when they still had not polluted true monotheism by associating others with the Deity (shirk) — took as their sole task the proclamation of Tawḥīd.[217] The Tawḥīdic proclamation is the ground level for humanity's worship of Allah.[218] This all-embracing vision of Allah as "One" suggests that humanity, too,

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[211] Rahman, *Major Themes*, 17; Kateregga, *Islam and Christianity*, 10 – 11.

[212] The *Shahadah* claims, "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is His Prophet."

[213] Javed Ahmad Ghamidi, *Islam: a Comprehensive Introduction*, trans. Dr. Shehzad Saleem (Model Town Lahore, Pakistan: Al-Mawrid, 2012), chap. 1, sec. 2, subsec. 9. Kindle.

[214] Kateregga & Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 1.

[215] Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, rev. and trans. Ahmad Zaki Hammad (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1990), 65. "Before thinking of organizing a Muslim community, and establishing the Islamic social system one must purify the hearts of people from the worship of anyone or anything other than Allah as we have described above." Longhurst, "*Tawḥīd* and Homooúsios," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies,* 225. ""In the Muslim's mind *Tawḥīd* is no merely theoretical concept. It is not just a theological or philosophical postulate but the very foundation upon which all creation is unified and sustained with and by its source."

[216] Ibid., 26.

[217] Abdel Haleem Mahmud, *The Creed of Islam*, (London: World of Islam Festival Trust, 1978), 14 – 15, 20.

[218] Alhaj Ajijola, *The Essence of Faith in Islam* (Lahore, Pakistan: Islamic Publications Ltd., 1978), 5 – 15.

should be one, giving grounds for social justice.[219] Apart from affirming Allah's oneness

(*Tawḥīd*), no one can truly worship Allah.[220] No one may share any of Allah's divinity with Him,

"even an atom of His divine power and authority," and no one can be associated with Allah

because he "is one and one only."[221] A potential result of *Tawḥīd* is a deterministic cosmos

where Allah determines even whether humans will trust or distrust Him.[222] If creation is to take

an illusory role, as Al-Ghazālī argued earlier (Chap. 1, Survey of Literature), then human beings

"are capable of embodying and manifesting the divine names and attributes."[223] Sufism handles

Tawḥīd's demand for an absolute unity more sensitively than other Islamic traditions.[224] By

comparison, Sufism's understanding of *Tawḥīd* is internally cogent and logical by subsuming

creation's existence to Allah's oneness, thus making creation a monist emanation of the

Tawḥīdic One or a mere illusion. Thus, the blasphemy of claiming that a human can be unified

with Allah comes not necessarily from an irreligious heart, but from a heart impressed by the

logic of *Tawḥīd*.[225]

Although many may become idolaters through their selfish hopes in identifying

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[219] Qutb, *Milestones*, 25.

[220] Ibid., 64.

[221] Kateregga & Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 2. Kateregga is writing. Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Macmillian Reference USA, 2005), vol. 5, 3561 – 3562.

[222] Watt, *Islam and Christianity today*, 126. A person's faith or unbelief might depend on whether God had guided him or let him astray: 'if god wills to guide anyone, he enlarges his breast for Islam, but if he wills to lead him astray, he makes his breast narrow and contracted as if he were climbing up into the sky' (6:125). Burrell, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to Islamic*, 142.

[223] Krokus, "Divine Embodiment," in *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 165. Krokus ties this thought to *Tawḥīd*: "Thus *Tawḥīd* is sometimes understood not only as the internal unity of God but also as the absolute unity of all reality such that in fact the only reality is God" (168 – 169).

[224] Poupin, "Trinitarian Experience in Sufism," in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 76. Krokus, "Divine Embodiment," in *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 165; Krokus describes the "stations" on the way to God developed by "most of the great systematizers of the Sufi path . . . ."

[225] Poupin, "Trinitarian Experience in Sufism," in *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 76. Poupin notes the Hallaj understood that true proclamation of *Tawḥīd* was only possible as a blasphemy and as a sacrifice, a blasphemy-punishment, where the worshipper knows that only Allah is and so by saying, "Allah and I are one" or "I am Allah," while in the semblance of a creature, rendered their death assured.

themselves with Allah, this is not the only motivation. Opposite this motivation, another impetus is possible: a desire to take seriously (reverently) the Qur'an along with the meaning and consequences of the cherished belief of Allah's *Tawḥīd*. It is true that many in the Sunni tradition might withhold judgment or explanation on how creation relates to Allah, whether by contingency, illusion, or emanation. The great Al-Ghazālī did not withhold judgment. He said that creation is illusory. Therefore, the urge to make oneself identified with Allah is not designed to commit *shirk*, but, rather, is designed to prevent *shirk* by denying the essential otherness of anyone else but Allah, thereby protecting *Tawḥīd*. If creation is illusory, then is committing *shirk* even possible?

With these comments, *Tawḥīd* is more clearly *the* descriptive attribute of Allah. The term denotes that Allah is utterly unique, that he is unipersonal (a unicity), and that there is no multiplicity conceived in Him internally. *Tawḥīd* additionally connotes a tendency to understand creation's otherness as emanational or illusory — this assertion will be looked at more closely in the next chapter. Sufism takes the doctrine of *Tawḥīd* to that logical end. The other traditions of Islamic theology, even if the other attributes are contested among them, maintain that *Tawḥīd* is positively known.

Conclusion

There is solid ground, then, for investigating what *Tawḥīd* means for humanity according to the Islamic doctrine of Allah. *Tawḥīd*, as *the* attribute of Allah, is at the center and formative of all Islamic thought, and, as such, provides a context for dialogue that respects what is important for Islam itself. With these terms squarely in view, the nature of the Deity proper to Islam and Christianity can be interrogated by the categories of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness. In the chapter that follows, the doctrine of *Tawḥīd* will be brought into a paratactic package with each of these categories, observing how *Tawḥīdic* Allah relates to human

relationships and their scope.[226]

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[226] "Paratactic" used thorough signifies "close analysis of things side by side with emphasis on how they relate." The meaning of this word used in a grammatical context signifies "two clauses linked side by side without a conjunction." Thus, the two clauses are closer by lack of a conjunction, and the two clauses require greater attention (analysis) due to the lack of the conjunction that would typical describe how the two clauses relate.

CHAPTER 3: ON *TAWḤĪDIC* ALLAH

Introduction

The three categories of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness set the framework of this

chapter. Specifically, how are Allah's oneness, distinctness, and relatedness to be understood?

These categories were derived from how humanity exists. Each human being is related, distinct,

and in oneness with other creatures, both biologically and cognitively.[227] The views of Muslim

scholars incorporated in what follows were chosen in an attempt to represent main currents of

Muslim thought. Abū Hāmid Al-Ghazālī (1058 – 1111 C.E.) and Taqī ad-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn

Taymīyya (1263 – 1328 C.E.) are two historical figures whose influence on Islamic thought

cannot be emphasized enough. The former has been called "probably the greatest theologian of

Islam and the most eloquent champion of Ashʻarism" and the latter is known for "the revival of

Ḥanbalism, . . . [and] culminated in the rise of the Wahhabi movement, founded in the eighteenth

century by Muhammad Ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhab" (d. 1792 C.E.).[228] Added to this list is Muhyi al-Din

Ibn ʻArabī (1165 – 1240 C.E.), whose thought was influenced by Al-Ghazālī but criticized by Ibn

Taymīyya. This assortment of historical scholars aims to represent prevailing formulations of

Islam on a spectrum from the more philosophical and mystical thinking of Ibn ʻArabi to the

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[227] Biologically (and character qualities as well), what is indicative in a parent partly passes to a child: like the colloquialism, "Like father, like son." There are, of course, differences in them but not so much that no image of the parent can be seen in the child. When there is an oneness cognitively, this does not refer to some metaphysical "container" of abstracized ideas somehow collected and "floating" aloft, shared by all humanity. Instead, the thought-patterns, affirmations, and beliefs indicative of one human can be communicated. Another human being appropriating the communicated-expressed-thought can share these. One human can mirror another's own thoughts, likening then one to the other. This is human cognitive union or human cognitive oneness. It is not to be forgotten that how one thinks effects how one acts and even one's physiological "being/becoming." Thus a human cognitive union with another entails, by extension, psychosomatic dimensions. In short, human nature is characterized by human thought. Also, every child has certain metaphysical data — the characteristics or qualities of their soul, spirit, mind, or heart — from his/her parents: the two parents' metaphysical data is summarized, complemented by, and elaborated in their child. This child, this third person, entails the other two persons of their parents.

[228] Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy: A Beginner's Guide*, ebook ed. (1997; Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011), chap. 5, sec. 2 and chap. 8, sec. 1. Kindle. The title of the original work published in 1997 was *Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Mysticism: A Short Introduction*, reissued in 2000 and reprinted in 2003. This work became part of the *Beginners Guide series* in 2009.

moderated and theological view of Al-Ghazālī unto Ibn Taymīyya's traditionalist position of

holding to the Qur'an and Hadith as interpreted by the Companions of the Prophet (*Sahabah*).[229]

Their thought, however, is too broad to offer an exhaustive account here. Al-Ghazālī's views

should be regarded with prominence since there are few historical Muslim figures whose

influence and religious positions have been accorded as many accolades. Contemporary work of

Muslim scholars and teachers complement these forbearers.

Since this project seeks to deliberate on which nature of the Deity better accounts for

human relationships, each of the three categories above must be "thought without" creation and

then "thought with" creation. What does the oneness, distinctness, and relatedness of Allah mean

considered immanently, without reference to creation (thought without)? Then, what do these

mean in regard to creation (thought with)?

A preliminary matter is Islam's doctrine(s)[230] on the nature of creation that has come

down through the centuries to Muslims today.[231] Islamic theologico-philosophical thought, as

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[229] Fakhry, *Islamic Philosophy*, chap. 8, sec. 1. Kindle. Fakhry also notes that Ibn Taymīyya promoted the interpretations of the immediate successors of the Companions of the Prophet, the *Tabi'un*.

[230] The complexities of the doctrine*s* of Allah as He stands next to creation are manifold and part of long fluxing discussions generally recognized as between the Kalam (theologians) representatives and the Islamic philosophers. Although someone like Ibn Taymīyya is understood as "holding to the basics of the Qur'an/Hadith" it is potently obvious from his writings that such a representation is woodenly reductionistic perhaps due to pedagogical purposes of presenting him as distinct from other Kalam and philosophical representatives (This thought owes to Burrell's thinking in the work listed below, on page 144.). Each of the following authors corroborate the claim here of the difficulties and complexities of the Creator/creation relationship in Islam. Burrell CSC, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 141 – 144; Ian Netton, *Allāh Transcendent: Studies in the Structure and Semiotics of Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Cosmology* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 21 – 22. Kindle; Mahmoud M. Ayoub, "Chapter 9: Theology and Philosophy," in *Islam: Faith and History*, ebook ed. (rep. 2012; London: Oneworld Publications, 2013). Kindle; Fakhry, "Interactions of Philosophy and Dogma," "Philosophy and Mysticism," and "The Progress of Anti-Rationalism and the onset of Decline," in *Islamic Philosophy*. Kindle; and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*, SUNY SERIES IN ISLAM, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006). I cite this entire source because of its great richness in discussing the matters of being, creation, and Allah.

[231] Burrell CSC, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical*, 142. Burrell sees the two equally important doctrines of *Tawḥīd* and creation as unresolvable.

outlined by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, is roughly broken down into three major tributaries: (1)

creation is somehow contingent, (2) creation is an emanation of Allah, and (3) creation is

illusory, and the only "Reality that is" certainly is Allah.[232] Nasr concludes that the crowning

achievement of Islamic metaphysics came from the Persian School of Isfahan (founded by Mīr

Dāmād) with the principle of *waḥdat al-wujūd* or the "transcendent unity of Being" — first

discussed by Ibn ʿArabī although not termed by him.[233] In one of the only places Nasr discusses

Tawḥīd, he writes:

> As far as the "transcendent unity of Being" or *waḥdat al-wujūd* is concerned, it
> must be said at the outset that this doctrine is not the result of ratiocination but of

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Footnotes

[232] Netton, *Allāh Transcendent*, 321 – 322. These three categories relate to Netton's conclusion about modern and medieval theology. The first, creation as seemingly contingent, corresponds to Netton's category of the "Way of the ʿUlamā'," where *bilā kayf'* is rigidly imposed, makes any real signification of signs (words) bereft of the function of referencing — to the referent. Thus the addition of "seemingly" is appropriate since this contingency of creation is just to be accepted without enquiry and is not, therefore, demonstrated as contingent. Creation is "contingent," but just how and in what manners and how creation relates to Allah are forbidden inquires under the pressure of *bilā kayf'*. Similarly is Netton's category, "The Way of the Unknowing," which still emphasizes "quiescence and acceptance, . . . before the absolute transcendence of God." Even the language of "contingency" could be considered an innovation beyond the Qur'anic revelation; rational and theological discourse upon revelation is necessary to demonstrate and, so, corroborate the revelatory claim. Nasr, "The Question of Existence and Quiddity and Ontology in Islamic Philosophy," in *Islamic Philosophy,* chap. 4, sec. 9. Kindle. After a riveting and masterful discussion of these formulae on creation, Nasr summarizes: "As far as *wujūd* is concerned, one can distinguish between the concept of *wujūd* and its reality. Furthermore, the concept or notion of *wujūd* is either of absolute *wujūd* or of a particular mode of existence called "portion" (*ḥissah*) of *wujūd* in Islamic philosophy. As for the reality of *wujūd*, it refers either to the all-embracing and general Reality of *wujūd* (*fard 'āmm*) or to particular "units" of the reality of *wujūd* (*fard khaṣṣ*). The structure of reality is envisaged differently by different schools of Islamic thought depending on how they conceive of these four stages or meanings of *wujūd*. The Ash'arite theologians simply refuse to accept these distinctions, whether they be conceptual or belonging to the external world. The school of Mullā Ṣadrā, at the other end of the spectrum of Islamic thought, makes clear distinctions among all four meanings of *wujūd*. Certain philosophers accept only the concept of *wujūd* and deny its reality, while certain Peripatetics accept the reality of *wujūd* but identify the multiplicity in the external world not with the multiplicity of existents but with that of *wujūd* itself so that they identify *wujūd* not with a single reality with grades but with realities (*ḥaqā'iq*). Then there are those thinkers identified with the "tasting of theosophy" (*dhawq al-ta'alluh*), especially Jalal al-Din Dawani, who believe that there is only one reality in the external world to which *wujūd* refers, and that reality is God. There are no other realities to which *wujūd* refers. Finally, there are several schools of Sufism with their own doctrines concerning the relation between the concept and reality of *wujūd*. The most metaphysical of these views sees *wujūd* as the absolute, single Reality beside which there is no other reality; yet there are other realities that, although nothing in themselves, appear to exist because they are theophanies of the single Reality, which alone Is as the absolutely unconditioned *wujūd*."

[233] Ibid., chap. 4, sec. 8, subsec. 1. Kindle. This largely neo-platonic view of the Creator/creation relationship no doubt owes somewhat to Hellenization but recognizing the source whence an idea or tradition comes does not verify its truth or falsity of representing what the Qur'an and Hadith teach. This is the genetic fallacy. Watt, *Islamic Philosophy*, 33.

intellection and inner experience. If correctly understood, it stands at the heart of the basic message of Islam, which is that of unity (*al-Tawḥīd*) and which is found expressed in the purest form in the testimony of Islam, *Lā ilāha illa' Llāh*, there is no divinity but Allah.[234]

Islam's doctrine(s) of creation resides somewhere among these three, but closer to (1), (2), or (3), depending on the view of particular sects or individuals belonging to the Islamic faith.[235] These three positions can be generally associated with the historical Islamic scholars formerly mentioned. Ibn Taymīyya is closest to (1),[236] which is creation as somehow contingent.[237] Al-

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[234] Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, chap. 4, sec. 8. Kindle. The quote continues: "This formula is the synthesis of all metaphysics and contains despite its brevity the whole doctrine of the Unity of the Divine Principle and the manifestation of multiplicity, which cannot but issue from that Unity before whose blinding Reality it is nothing. The Sufis and also the Shi'ite esoterists and gnostics have asked, "What does divinity (*ilāh*) mean except reality or *wujūd*?" . . . [those purifying themselves] have realized that Reality or *wujūd* belongs ultimately to God alone, that not only is He One, but also that He is the only ultimate Reality and the source of everything that appears to possess *wujūd*. All *wujūd* belongs to God while He is transcendent vis-à-vis all existents. The Quran itself confirms this esoteric doctrine in many ways, such as when it asserts that God is "the First and the Last, the Outward and the Inward (53:3) or when it says, "Whithersoever ye turneth, there is the Face of God.'[sic]"

[235] This is granting an actual analysis of their doctrine because Sunni Orthodoxy prescribes a refusal to develop the doctrine in either great theological or philosophical depth. Burrell CSC, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion of Classical Islamic*, 146; Binyamin Abrahamov, "Appendix I: The Creed of Abū Zurʻa ʻUbaydallāh Ibn ʻAbd Al-Karīm Al-Rāzī (D. 264/878) and Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad Ibn Idrīs Al-Rāzī (D. 277/890)," *in Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 54 – 58. Two clauses of the second creed are especially important: "Belief in and acceptance of traditions as they are without question of 'why' and 'how'" and "There are traditions which must not be interpreted." Abrahamov concludes that "even among the traditionalists there was no general consensus concerning articles of faith" (56). That creation is only seemingly contingent is justified by the prohibitions against developing how this can be so. Certainly, to show creation as truly contingent can simply be accepted, but it cannot be demonstrated without a great deal of innovation and kalām.

[236] Ibn Taymiyya, *A Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 314. After waylaying the Christian idea of *hulūl*, i.e., that the Creator "subsisted" in the "substratum" of a creature, as in the case of Christ, Ibn Taymīyya claims that "It is evident by sound reason and by the consensus of intelligent men that the creature has no subsistence except in the Creator." Ibn Taymīyya is equally vitriolic towards Ibn ʻArabi's putative pantheism, noted only a few pages later: "They make the very existence of the Lord of the universe — the eternal, the one necessary in Himself — the same existence as that of the contingent, fashioned, governed being, as says Ibn ʻArabi: ". . . [the] transcendent Truth is creation which resembles it. The factor that is the creator of the creature, the factor that is the creature of the creator — all of that is of one essence." [Taymīyya reports concerning Ibn ʻArabī:] He says [in another place], ". . . in respect to existence He is identical with existent things, those things which are called temporal and exalted in themselves; but they are not He"" (317). It is striking that Ibn Taymīyya holds to what can be identified as panentheism ("creature has no subsistence except in the Creator") but is so intolerant of Ibn ʻArabi's so-called pantheism. Even when the last quote of Ibn ʻArabi is presented by Ibn Taymīyya, it is evident that Ibn ʻArabi does not want to put forward full pantheism — "but they are not He."

[237] The doctrine of "love," even understood as "mercy," in Islam presents no small problem towards maintaining the distinctness of the creation, thereby retaining creation's true contingency. (Mercy has, in Islam, a "self-giving" character like how love is properly understood at its essential basis. Allah's mercy is His giving a pardon or, maybe better, freeing from consequences for sin. Either way, Allah's mercy is an activity that gives a new condition for the creature, for that creature's benefit, upon whom Allah's mercy shines.) How to maintain Allah's self-sufficiency and to attribute Allah's love towards creation is the difficulty. For if Allah must create in order to

Ghazālī affirms an experiential-mystical oneness with the divine or, as he puts it, confessing God's unity (*Tawḥīd*) is "extinction in unity" accomplishable by observation (*mushahadah*) on the effulgence of divine light.[238] After he was delivered from error, he also describes this unity as a "purification of the heart from everything other than God Most High. Its key . . . is the utter absorption of the heart in the remembrance of God. Its end is being completely lost in God."[239]

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love, then Allah is not self-sufficient; if Allah is self-sufficient but loves not, then the Sunna and Qur'an are false. The consensus among Ibn-Taymīyya, Al-Ghazālī, and Ibn 'Arabī, is that Allah does love, and does love before he creates by loving Himself. This is no reciprocal thou but only a reflexive me. All creaturely love for the Creator is a "being pulled into" Allah's own self-love; in this, creation's contingency is threatened since this love is an activity of the Creator "loving Himself through" creatures. Ibn Taymīyya does the best to protect creation's contingency by saying that Allah's love for creation is "subordinate" to His love for Himself. Ibn Taymiya, *al-Ihtijaj bi-l-qadar in Maimu'at al-rasa 'il al-kubra* (1323; Cairo: al-Matba'a al- 'Amiriya al-Sharafiya, 1905 – 1906), I, 374 and II, 115, cited in Joseph Norment Bell, *Love Theory in Later Hanbalite Islam*, STUDIES IN ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE, eds. George F. Hourani, Muhsin Mahdi, Parviz Morewedge, Nicholas Rescher, and Ehsan Yar-Shater (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1979), 69 – 70; Al-Ghazali, *The Revival of Religious Sciences*, trans. Reza Shah-Kazemi, vol. 6, bk. 36. He says that "[Allah] does indeed love then [humans], but in reality He loves nothing other than Himself, in the sense that He is the totality, and there is nothing in being apart from Him." On 'Arabī's view: Miguel Asin Palacios, *El Islam cristianizado* (Madrid: Editorial Plutarco, 1931), 243 – 244, cited in Bell, *Love Theory*, 72. Ibn Taymīyya looks to two sayings of the Prophet for support to this sort of self-love: "There is none to whom praise is more beloved than God, and for this reason he praised himself" and "I do not number my praise for thee [but praise thee] just as thou hast praised thyself." Volf draws the conclusion that creation is illusory if love is worked out in this self-love way: Volf, *Allah*, 168.

[238] Al-Ghazāli, *Mishkat al-Anwar* [*The Niche for Lights*] trans. William Gairdner, Vol. XIX (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1924), sec. 7. Section seven is titled "The "God-Aspect": an "advanced" Explanation of the Relation of these Lights to ALLAH" and begins so. "It may be that you desire greatly to know the aspect (wajh) [p. 21] whereby Allâh's light is related to the heavens and the earth, or rather the aspect whereby He is in Himself the Light of heavens and earth. And this shall assuredly not be denied you, now that you know that Allâh is Light, and that beside Him there is no light. and that He is every light, and that He is the universal light: since light is an expression for that by which things are revealed; or.[sic], higher still, that by and for which they are revealed; yea, and higher still, that by, for, and from which they are revealed: and now that, you know, too that, of everything called light, only that by, for, and from which things are revealed is real--that Light beyond which there is no light to kindle and feed its flame, for It is kindled and fed in itself, from Itself, and for Itself, and from no other source at all. Such a conception, such a description, you are now assured, can be applied to the Great Primary, alone. You are also assured that the heavens and the earth are filled with light appertaining to those two fundamental light-planes, our Sight and our Insight; by which I mean our senses and our intelligence . . . ."; Netton, *Allāh Transcendent*, 321. Al-Ghazālī is a combination of the "Way of the Mystic" and the "Way of the Unknowing." Al-Ghazālī identifies a three-fold movement for how Allah brings something into existence in another place. From the Throne, through a spiritual current called the Chair, and unto the Tablet of Destiny are the three moves. Al-Ghazzali, *The Alchemy of Happiness*, trans. Claud Field, chap. 2. Kindle.

[239] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazālī's Path to Sufism: his Deliverance from Error, al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*, trans. R. J. Mccarthy S. J. (2000; Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 2006), 57. The word for "lost" above is literally annihilation.

And Ibn 'Arabī's position is tantamount to pantheism, that all is Allah, which corresponds to (3) above.[240]

Islam's doctrine(s) of creation present other challenges because of *Tawḥīd*; these difficulties are addressed occasionally in what follows. We must be mindful that the Islamic doctrine of creation is not uniform. While considering oneness, distinctness, and relatedness, the discussion will have to remain elastic enough to account for the lack of Muslim consensus on the nature of creation. How human relationships are accounted for by the doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah will be influenced by the way those human relationships are understood. Given the three possible doctrines of creation noted in the last paragraph, three possible ways of understanding human relationships follow. Human relationships can be (1) relationships among actual contingent creatures, (2) relationships of creatures who are monistic emanations of Allah, or (3) illusory relationships of illusory creatures.

<div align="center">Oneness</div>

Tawḥīd means "one/oneness/unity," and there are at least four ways to understand the term.[241] (1) To apply "one" as a number to Allah is incorrect. He is beyond numericity.[242] (2) Allah is not "one" of a species or genus so He is not part of a group that Allah can be counted within or part of. (3) Allah is unique, not "one of a kind," but simply "one, stand apart, and transcendent." Allah's oneness identifies Him as the One who is utterly unique. He is

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[240] It might be more accurate to say that titling it "pantheism" is a misnomer since, on this view, God is all instead of all is God.

[241] Encyclopedia of Religion, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 3561 – 3562. The four definitions of "one" that follow come from this source.

[242] This is a dangerous stance as the commentary on Denys Turner's similar claim made clear in the earlier section on the "Survey of the Literature." On the basis of *Tawḥīd*, it is more understandable that a Muslim would make the claim that numerical values are not properly predicated of Allah since such numbering supposes a sequence of numbers and distinction among them, which is what *Tawḥīd* as predicated of Allah denies considered before creation.

categorically singular *suī et sibi* ("of Himself and to Himself"). (4) Allah is not compound and there can be no multiplicity or division in Him. He is Allah, who is unipersonal and to worship Him is to be part of unitary monotheism.[243] He is a unicity, sole, stand alone, and indeed "one." *Tawḥīd* rightly denotes (3) and (4) but not (1) and (2).[244] Therefore, *Tawḥīd* stands both for Allah's (4) oneness and that He is (3) unique. Three (3) focuses on the manner of His existence and knowing He is unique is achievable according to apophaticism: Allah is *not* this, *neither* that, *nor* those, and so forth until the entire creation is delineated. This uniqueness implies dissimilarity to creation, but the degree of dissimilarity is important to parse out. What this uniqueness entails positively is not necessary to affirm that the uniqueness is not to be confused with creation or things in creation. In classical Islamic metaphysical terms, Allah is *wājib al-wujūd* (Necessary Being), a reference applied wholly unto Himself since all else is either contingent or somehow Him.[245] If creation is indeed contingent, then this aspect of *Tawḥīd* forms a stark divide between creation and Allah. Four (4), however, cannot be known through apophatic logic because it affirms the unicity of Allah with certainty and positively, with no room for compromise whatsoever. Those who have knowledge of *Tawḥīd declare confidently* against Christians (and others) that Allah *is* unipersonal. To say all the things that Allah is not cannot grant confidence to say certainly what He is without lucid and positive knowledge. Surah 112 gives this revelatory knowledge, expressing both what He is and what He is not: "Say: He is

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[243] This term, unitary monotheism, is appropriated from James White. *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur'an* (Baker Publishing Group, 2013). Kindle.

[244] Al-Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief*, 1st treatise, 10th proposition. He affirms the two senses noted above.

[245] Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy*, chap. 4, sec. 3. Kindle. Some would argue that Allah is beyond all categories of being. The phrase, Necessary Being, could just be adapted to the One who exists (exists here made analogical) before and above all things and upon Whom all else depends. Further, the nature of contingency, when it is presented as actual, differs from Islamic tradition to tradition as represented above by Al-Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabi, and Ibn Taymīyya.

Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him."[246]

This Surah, and the *Shahadah* ("There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is His Prophet") which encapsulates it, function to provide a strict wall around Allah's (3) uniqueness and (4) unicity. They demarcate a clear line between Creator and all creation by which *shirk* is judged and through which Christianity's belief in Jesus as the Son of God is denied.[247] Comments on uniqueness will be saved for the next section on distinctness and attention paid here to Allah's unicity. There can be no multiplicity or division in Allah. From this perspective, it is readily understood how historical Muslim figures like Al-Hallāj and Ibn ʿArabī conceived everything monistically.[248] Al-Hallāj went so far as to praise himself, as an expression of

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[246] Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 11. Fazlur says Surah 112 is the essence of Islam: "The short but emphatic sura 112 — which has been rightly regarded by the Islamic tradition as presenting the essence of the whole Qur'an — calls God "al-Ṣamad," which means an immovable and indestructible rock, without cracks or pores, which serves as sure refuge from floods." It is not unimportant that this essential Surah for all Islamic tradition contains tamthīl, through this rock analogy.

[247] Kateregga and Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 1. Kateregga says that "The key Surah . . . in the Qur'an testifies to Islam's monotheism. Ghamidi, *Islam*, chap. 1, sec. ii, subsec. 9 – 10. Shirk is unfathomable because "if God had partners and associates as they think, . . . at some time or another, [they] would have tried to rebel against Him and overthrow Him and the whole system of this world would have been disrupted." It ought to be wondered if such a theological vision of polytheism is not already entirely warped due to the supposed "evil" that would have to reside in the metaphysical realm of the gods for the possibility of war. Hypothetically, why would the realm of Allah, pure as He is, have to contain, if there were other gods with Him, evil in the gods themselves? War, after all, is the antithesis of peace but, if these other gods were like Allah, would they not be free from the type of vice that would lead to war? Is this text in the Qur'an (17:42) imposing sinful qualities to these putative gods? Qutb, *Milestones*, 68. "This action of the Jews and Christians was placed by the Qur'an in the same category of shirk as the Christians' making Jesus into the Son of God and worshipping him. The latter is a rebellion against Allah, . . ." Shirk is outlined in Surah 4:48. If shirk is the unforgivable sin, then Fazlur Rahman's comments about the massive scope of humans' committing this sin must cause no small problem for proselytizing: " . . . that whenever a creature claims complete self-sufficiency or independence . . . it thus claims infinitude and a share in divinity (shirk)." *Major Themes*, 67.

[248] Ibn Taymīyya, in *Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, cites another passage of Ibn ʿArabi that concludes by saying that "There is no worship of anything other than God in anything which is worshiped" (319). In other words, idolatry is impossible. I am using the term "illusory" to convey that creatures are those things/persons which are extensions of Allah's existence. In this regard, Ibn Arabī says that humans bear Allah's attributes.

worshipping Allah, which would result in his death due to blasphemy.[249] Al-Ghazālī does not avoid this issue either but only subtly suggests at some ontological unity (in being with Allah) while emphasizing a "self-forgetting" experiential union ("extinction in unity"). Even Ibn Taymīyya could not afford teaching a full-fledged contingency of creation.[250]

This section has parsed Allah's oneness into two distinct features: that He is unique (3) and that He is simple, uncompounded, a unicity with no plurality or multiplicity in Him (4). Allah's unicity, which is neither internally nor externally differentiated, considered before creation poses no problem.[251] Allah with creation, however, effects a problematic plurality or multiplicity. This problem is compounded by the Islamic teaching that Allah directly guides creatures and that all derive their existence from Him, as memorialized by Ibn Taymīyya's statement: "[a creature] has no existence and no foundation except in the creator" and "*Hulul* [indwelling] can only be understood if that which indwells is subsisting in and having a need for that in which it resides."[252] If the creature exists somehow in the Creator, having no real and

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[249] Poupin, "Trinitarian Experience in Sufism," in *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 80. The jurist and mystic, Dawûd Ispahan (900 C.E.), "sent a first *fatwâ* against Hallâj . . . ."

[250] Ibn Taymīyya, in *Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 316 & 323. "Furthermore this is not reasonable *hulul. Hulul* can only be understood if that which indwells is subsisting in and having a need for that in which it resides" (323). This, again, looks to be panentheism or monism. It is not unimportant that Ibn Taymīyya has every reason to clarify and distinguish his view of the Creator/creature relationship since he is refuting Christians and other sects of Islam with great fervor and at great length. It is unclear how the creature "indwells" the Creator but Ibn Taymīyya does not clarify further. This is in accord with *bilā kayf*'.

[251] Although it is no small point that man only imagines that he can image an undifferentiated singularity as a person since this is never part of his experience and so never epistemically accessible. Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 128 – 129. "The unrelated, unrelatable, absolutely one could not be a person. There is no such thing as a person in the categorical singular. This is already apparent in the words in which the concept of person grew up; the Greek word "prosopon" means literally "(a) look towards"; with the prefix "pros" (toward) it includes the notion of relatedness as an integral part of itself. . . . To this extent the overstepping of the singular is implicit in the concept of person."

[252] Ibn Taymīyya, in *Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 316 and 323. Ibn Taymīyya is, admittedly, attempting to parse out a piece of Trinitarian theology by one Saʿid ibn Bitriq, a piece somewhat tragically static and built on an analogy of layers ("substratum"). Nevertheless, what is the consequence of saying that the creature subsists in the Creator as Ibn Taymīyya has it? Knowing Ibn Taymīyya's stout stand on the true contingency of creation elsewhere, as put forth in *Al-ʿUbudiyyah* [*Being a True Slave of Allah*], he is properly understood as claiming this *contingency* (in *Al-ʿUbudiyyah*) but not *demonstrating* it (in *Response to Christianity*).

relative contingence and distinctness of its own, the question becomes how to deal with the

changeableness of creatures that somehow reside in Allah (*hulul*) in view of His immutability

and oneness (*Tawḥīd*). For, if Allah does not change, how does the perpetual flow and relative

change of creatures entering and exiting existence reconcile with His immutability?[253] How does

creaturely *hulul* not introduce multiplicity or plurality into the Creator? It is here that what

Vanhoozer calls an *idem* (sameness) understanding of God — appropriated of Allah in this

context — comes powerfully to the fore.[254] Allah's *Tawḥīd* (oneness) demands a certain static

sameness that must be protected. It is not surprising that the early Muslim debates about how to

understand Allah's relationship to creation would hinge on retaining Allah's immutability, which

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In *Al-'Ubudiyyah*, he distinguishes between a correct view of creation (that it is contingent), a mystical view of creation, and a view of creation that is pantheistic (or makes creation illusory) belonging to the hypocrites and heretics. His discussion centers on the word *fana'* (oblivion). The wisdom of the prohibition of *bilā kayf'* is justified by observing how Ibn Taymīyyah handles a more philosophico-theological context (entailing innovation) in his *Response to Christianity* vis-à-vis how he handles it in a less innovative context of *Al-'Ubudiyyah*. His inability to maintain creation's true contingency comes from the more philosophico-theological context (in his *Response to Christianity*) and not from the less innovative *Al-'Ubudiyyah*. Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiyah, "*Fana'* ("oblivion")," in *Al-'Ubudiyyah* [*Being a True Slave of Allah*] ed. Afsar Siddiqui, trans. Nasiruddin al-Khattab (1999; London: Ta-Ha Publishers Ltd., 2013), pt. 4, sec. 2; Burrell, "Creation," *Cambridge Companion of Classical Islamic*, 144. He notes that from the earliest time of the Muʿtazilites "existence belongs to God essentially." This sets the stage for how to get that existence over to creatures without separating existence from Allah, yet somehow keep Allah distinct from creation. Richard Frank, "Kalam and philosophy: a perspective from one problem," in *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 71 – 95. Frank provides abundant primary sources.

       Perhaps presenting Ibn Taymīyya's rather robust philosophical statements is uncharitable without offsetting it against that for which he is better known. His Ḥanbalism demanded restriction against innovation and prohibited strictly *kuhr*: just accept what the Qur'an says without too much analysis [*bilā kayf'*; a form of fundamentalism].

[253] Burrell CSC, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 144.

[254] Vanhoozer, "Does the Trinity Belong to a Theology of Religions?," in *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 48. Vanhoozer contrasts the idem-like God, the God whose identity is that He says that same, with the ipse-like God, whose identity is His faithfulness to His word. "Ispe-identity—selfhood—is not merely sameness. To be a self is to do more than enjoy an uninterrupted persistence in time. And yet, to be a self, there must be some principle of permanence through time. But is there a kind of permanence in time that is not simply the continuity of the Same? . . . [keeping one's word] relates the search for a principle of permanence in time to the question of "Who?" rather than "What?" The principle in question is that of keeping one's word. The continuity of the Same is one thing, the constancy of friendship or a promise quite another. Ipse-identity, centered on the self's constancy to its word, does not exclude otherness, but requires it (49)." Ipse-identity makes room for a certain amount of dynamism within a larger stability, what Millard Erickson calls a "stable" view of God. This stability is distanced from inert conceptions of God and likewise Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. To focus on "who" demands a certain degree of alienation from inanimate categories of "the what." Millard Erickson, *The Word Became Flesh: a Contemporary Incarnational Christology* (1991; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 542.

entails concern for His unity (*Tawḥīd*), and thereby established a foundation for the doctrines of

Al-Ghazālī's mystical oneness and Ibn 'Arabī's so-called pantheism.[255] For oneness and

immutability reinforce one another to the degree that introducing plurality violates immutability,

therein infringing on oneness/unity (*Tawḥīd*), based on the notion that creation is an extension

Allah's existence. Poupin's explanation of Sufism's *Tawḥīdic*-dualistic logic, outlined in chapter

one, *a fortiori* stands because affirmation of *Tawḥīd* by a creature that is a genuine other

demarcates an irresolvable dualism. Al-Ghazālī's expression, "extinction in unity," entails an

awareness of this problem.[256] In sum, the articulation of Allah's unicity without creation is

achievable, but accounting for His simplicity and unity in view of the Qur'anic revelation of His

role as direct Commander, Fashioner, and Giver of Existence (derived from Him) complicates

intractably the plurality of creation.[257] Al-Ghazālī's formulae are understandable in view of this

intractability: "extinction in unity" and "completely lost in God." Ibn Taymīyya's formulation,

"[a creature] has no existence and no foundation except in the Creator," demands some bridge

between Allah's Existence and creaturely existence imposing an irresolvable multiplicity ever

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[255] Burrell CSC, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 145 – 146. The Muʿtazilites and later Ashʿarites were terribly concerned about agency and creating being linked, so much so their schemas aimed to ascribe all agencies to the One agency of Allah. The trick was how to do this without violating his distinctness, and so immutability, and at the same time affirm real moral responsibilities of humans for their acts performed by their moral agency. The Muʿtazilite program ultimately would be found wanting by Ashʿarī because of its insistence on (1) that the Qur'an was created and (2) because of its moral deficiency in keeping Allah from being involved in the evil actions of men. The Sunni orthodoxy that would result from Ashʿarism took a "hands off" approach to parsing out the creator/creation paradigm: "Sunni orthodoxy . . . is that which denies an overarching conceptual scheme for creator and creature" (146).

[256] Poupin, "Trinitarian Experience in Sufism," in *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 76 and 80. "For if the assimilation—the *tashbîh* (with its risks of pantheism, and even idolatrous tendencies)—is avoided, it is but for a purely abstract profession of the divine unicity—the *taʿtîl*. And this is what Hallâj and Ahmad Ghazâlî refused" (80).

[257] Al Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī Sharḥ asmā' Allāh al-ḥusnā* [*The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God*] trans. with notes by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 2013), 49 – 149. The "names" in the text above are English translations of a few of the "ninety-nine beautiful names." Al-Ghazālī discusses each one at length. Of course, if creation is actually contingent, then the unity of Allah stands strong without invasion of plurality.

inimical to *Tawḥīd*, Allah's oneness.[258] Appeal to *bilā kayf'* is merely an *ad hoc* retreat from the arguments of how creation relates to Allah, not an engagement of them.[259]

To reiterate, there is no "otherness" allowed in this unicity, considering it without creation. As noted earlier, *Tawḥīd* demands, *contra* Christianity, that Allah be unipersonal: He begets not nor is He begotten. Without severe distortion to the denotation of "otherness," there can be no formulation of "otherness" on this schema. Otherness means to be distinct or different.[260]

Perhaps, if it were allowed that Muslims are genuinely binitarian, taking the Qur'an as true Other and Allah as Another, otherness could be established. A proposal of this sort issues from the Sunni position — or majority Muslim position — that the Qur'an is eternal and uncreated. On such a proposal, it would be accepted that there are two eternal Ones, Allah and the Qur'an, which are clearly distinguishable, but, concerning both, divinity is predicated. Any step in this direction by Islam would be a concession to the binitarian formulation of Christ as *Logos* put forth in the New Testament.[261] "Otherness" can be denoted, as appropriated to sentient entities, as an "actual being" engaging in recognition and response as well as in initiationing highly organized and complex communion to another.[262] This would seem to suppose a real

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[258] Ibn Taymīyya, in *Muslim Theologian's Response to Christianity*, 316; Burrell CSC, "Creation," *Cambridge Companion of Classical Islamic*, 144; Richard Frank, "Kalam and philosophy: a perspective from one problem," in *Islamic Philosophical Theology*, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980), 71 – 95.

[259] *Bilā kayf'* means "neither question too much nor innovate, but accept what is taught."

[260] This definition is expanded below but using such a modern day conventional definition at the outset hopefully curtails any suspicion of bias driving the definition. "Otherness," Dictionary.com (Dictionary.com LLC, 2014), http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/otherness?s=t accessed 17 March 2014; "Otherness," Merriam Webster: an Encyclopædia (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2014), http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/otherness accessed 17 March 2014.

[261] The language of "binitarian" is no repudiation of "Trinitarianism," but the usage of "binitarian" is designed to signify the New Testament theme of pairing the Son and Father together frequently.

[262] In mind are human persons, who have had existence predicated of them (contra Kant), and are sufficiently endowed with will, power, and mind to carry out above said acts; "communication" means that extended

distinction between one entity and another — the ability to point to distinctions without losing element(s) of sameness between one and another. Otherness can be applied to an item or thing, which makes it distinguishable from the one so observing it (I-It).[263] If the Qur'an were considered "an Other" in this way, it would be distinguishable from Allah yet the same as Allah as His Word, a Representation of Him. This would not achieve a sound foundation for otherness between personal entities (I-Thou),[264] but it would between a personal entity (Allah) and a thing (Qur'an). Nevertheless, it would be a brick towards constructing otherness/distinction as a real possibility for the Islamic view of Allah independent of creation. This all sounds too dangerously like the *Logos* of Christianity, who is personal and not a mere thing. This could be a reason for Islam's refusal to establish a binitarian view of Allah and the Qur'an despite the status of the Qur'an — the Mu'zalites having been defeated — as uncreated and eternal.[265] A binitarian view might help resolve the difficulty of Allah's unicity in view of creation's distinctions. The Qur'an would be a Treatise, being Allah's eternal Speech, always already distinct from Him. This would establish otherness on the basis of the relationships between the "mother book" (Qur'an) and Allah. Admittedly, this formulation derives it logic from Trinitarian rationality.

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movement of signifying (although not necessarily phonetically based) by which a person can "connect" with another. The phrase, "highly organized and complex," has been added to hopefully differentiate communication performed by or claimed to be performed by humans, angels, jinn, Allah, God, Father, Son, Spirit, from that of creatures with less communicative ability (various animals and simpler forms of life).

[263] Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Ronald Gregor Smither, Scribner Classics ed. (1958; New York: Scribner, 2000), 3 – 9. That "otherness" depends on the "mind" or "psychology" of the "I" in observing or viewing an actual "other" has troubling ramifications. Zizioulas rightly argues that Buber's position does not overcome the totalizing of the self since the "I" still holds priority in how the "I" decides to view the actual "other." Zizioulas, *Commounion and Otherness*, 47. At this point, "recognition and response," i.e., communication, is connoted in the concept of "otherness" while "distinct" or "different" is the denotation. Although these are the ideas used to discuss otherness herein, it may well be the case that "otherness" is nothing more than the irreducible quality "to be youself." This "being of youself" (how you exist) must have the same ontological status as mere existing (what you exist as) or else "yourself-ness" will be swallowed up by "what-ness" because "what-ness" does not particularize on "how you are" but on "what you are." These issues are a bit more technical than what is needed, so, in the interest of concision, the simple denotation of "distinct/different" with the connotation of "communicative capacity" suffices for the definition of "otherness."

[264] Ibid., 7 – 8.

[265] Mu'zalites held the Qur'an to be created.

All this, however, is not the case according to the *Din* of Islam. Allah is unipersonal and indeed solitary. Allah's mental conceptualization of others, i.e., His potential creatures, does not effect or actualize "otherness." These potential creatures could in no way recognize and respond to Allah prior to being logically and temporally actualized. There could be no co-mmunion, no mutual recognition and response, in Allah because, before creation, there is no external differentiation and Allah is not, under the rubric of *Tawḥīd*, internally differentiated. Allah could recognize Himself and perhaps reflexively respond to Himself, but He could not as "another" or in relation to "others." If it is argued that the "self" becomes "other" or an attempt is made to understand "otherness" to mean "self," then this inevitably commends a totalitarianism of "self," subsuming "otherness" into its domain of "same/self." It is readily obvious, contrary to such an argument, that to be oneself is not to be another. Allah, considered apart from creation, is not "other as object known" but only "other as self known," which provides no foundation for distinctness/otherness.[266]

Tawḥīdic Allah, considered even with creation, still has a tough time grounding otherness as the authors surveyed demonstrate. To be extinguished in view of Allah's unity (*Tawḥīd*) is to lose the ability to recognize and respond. It should be granted that the human activity of recognizing and responding leads a human to Al-Ghazālī's mystical-experiential "extinction in unity." Is it apt, then, to say that the real *telos* of otherness is absorption into Allah's unity? If these creatures, which are to be extinguished in this unity, retain their actual otherness, how is Allah's unity retained, as demanded by *Tawḥīd*? If Ibn 'Arabī's paradigm is accepted, then the real otherness of creatures was never the case, but only Allah's mental projections, which are dispersed at the onset of Allah's *Tawḥīd*. How does this account for human relationships and

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[266] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (1978; Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1995), 93 – 95.

how humans experience them? If creatures subsist in Allah's Existence, as one strand of Ibn

Taymīyya's thought would have it, then emanational otherness is possible, but Allah's

distinctness (*Tawḥīd*) is compromised. Creatures would exist in the "plane" of Allah's

Existence.[267] If the Sunni teaching "accept but do not innovate" nor "question too much" (*bilā*

kayf") is allowed, it only perpetuates this problem, as it is to this day.[268]

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[267] Perhaps this is an ungenerous treatment of Ibn Taymīyya's use of "in"; maybe he could mean "within but different from" but among the works covered he does not make this clear by explaining "in." He claims that the creation is contingent and moves on. This is not to say the Christianity has its doctrine of creation distilled of all its quirks either. The resolution for both religions is advanced by use of the preposition "by" rather than "in." Creation "is being sustained *by* the Word of His power" (Heb. 1:3; φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ translates as, "and sustaining all things by the word of His power . . ." [translation mine]; *Rhēmati*'s usage is important since *rhēma* refers frequently to the spoken word or proclaimed word, that is, the "word" exteriortized from the one so speaking whereas *logos* is the "order, ration, reason, logic, sentiment, wisdom, or coherence" by which the language of the spoken word (*rhēma*) takes as its foundation. Colossians 1:17 potentially controverts Hebrews 1:3, using ἐν (*en*; in) although the syntactical range for *en* provides numerous escapes if the context allows: *en* can be instrumental (by), locative (in), causal (because of), among other options. Speaking of the Son of God, Col. 1:17 is inscribed in Greek: "καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, . . ." and translates as, "and all thing in Him hold together [or "endure" or "consist"; translation mine]. Without innovative *theologoumena*, clearing the way for how "in" can still point to a truly contingent creation without involving an identity or monist continuity between Creator and creation is doubtful.

[268] This set of concerns is not something hoisted upon Islam by an external critical Christian eye. These difficulties listed in this paragraph are historical to Islam, as the various schisms of the authors above illustrate. Al-Ghazālī's minor spiritual biography, his *Deliverance from Error* (*al-Munqidh min al-Dalal*), best captures the mythos of the several sects attempts to articulate and expound Islam. Several sections are worth quoting. "You also want to hear about my daring in mounting from the lowland of servile conformism to the highland of independent investigation: and first of all what profit I derived from the science of *Kalām*; secondly, what I found loathsome among the methods of the devotees of *ta'līm* [those who held that one Imam alone taught and knew the truth], . . . thirdly, the methods of philosophizing which I scouted; and finally, what pleased me in the way pursued by the practice of Sufism" (pg. 18). "I began . . . with the science of *Kalām* . . . it [is] a science adequate for its own aim, but inadequate for mine. For its aim is simply to conserve the creed of the orthodox for the orthodox and to guard it from the confusion introduced by the innovators. . . . [new paragraph] A group of the *mutakallimūn* [Kalām theologians] did indeed perform the task assigned to them by God. They ably protected orthodoxy and defended the creed which had been readily accepted from the prophetic preaching and boldly counteracted the heretical innovations" (pg. 26). "I noted, however, that not a single Muslim divine had directed his attention and endeavor to that end [of learning philosophy par excellence]. What the *mutakallimūn* had to say in their books, where they were engaged in refuting the philosophers, was nothing but abstruse, scattered remarks, patently inconsistent and false, which could not conceivably hoodwink an ordinary intelligent person, to say nothing of one familiar with the subtleties of the philosophical sciences" (pg. 28). It is further worth mention that Al-Ghazālī's *Moderation in Belief* treats on the obligatory or free act of creation (treatise three) but not the metaphysics of the creation/Creator relationship. Al-Ghazālī, "On the Acts of God (Exalted is He): The Entirety of the Acts of God (Exalted is He) are Contingent, and None of them may be described as Obligatory," *Moderation in Belief*, 3rd treatise, sec. 1. Kindle.

Distinctness

Tanzīh, Allah's transcendence, or uniqueness, is the other major denotation of *Tawḥīd*.[269]

Although *Tanzīh* denotes transcendence, but this transcendence should be distinguished from

what the Christian doctrine of God's transcendence emphasizes. Both Islam and Christianity

affirm that "the Deity is beyond the cosmos," but Islam takes dissimilarity as one of Allah's

thirteen essential attributes.[270] *Tanzīh* proves to be more than just about Allah being "beyond."

Allah's *Tanzīh* has such gravitas that, for some Muslims, it makes Allah completely dissimilar to

anything in creation.[271] For others, like Al-Ghazālī, analogical predication is allowed. Some

hesitate, however, to use anthropomorphism; this is not a surprise since, according to Islam, man

is not made in Allah's image. Thus, either radical dissimilarity or just dissimilarity is as an

essential feature of *Tanzīh*. This is not to say the Christianity's doctrine of God's transcendence

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[269] Stephen Myongsu Kim*, "Divine Transcedence: A Religio-Hisotrical Portrayal," *Transcendence of God - a comparative study of the Old Testament and the Qur'an*, PhD thesis, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, 2009: yymmdd < http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-10172009-125341/ > accessed on March 2, 2014; Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-asnā fī sharḥ asmā Allāh al-Ḥusnā* [*The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*] trans. with notes David Burrell and Nazih Daher, THE ISLAMIC TEXTS SOCIETY (1992; Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 2013), 25. Al-Ghazālī says that "What completes the enumeration [of names of Allah], however, will be the meaning of God's unity [*Tawḥīd*], whether conveyed by the expression 'the Unique' or 'the One'. For it is highly improbable that these two expressions hold place of two names when their meaning is one." Kateregga elsewhere (pg. 2) also claims that "In His unity, God is not like any other person or thing that can come to anyone's mind. His qualities and nature are conspicously unique. He has no associates." Similarly: "No human language is good enough to describe God, for there is nothing else like Him. God's nature is far beyond our limited conception. Nevertheless, we do know that He is one" (pg. 1).

[270] Rauf, *Islam: Creed and Worship*, 4 – 5.

[271] Mahmoud Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History* (Oneworld Publications, 2013), . Kindle. Ayoub states something shocking only because it is so contradictory: "Muslims believe that God, in his essence, is unknowable, inconceivable. He is above all categories of time and space, form and number, or any other material or temporal attributions. Yet he can be known through his attributes, called in the Qur'ān "God's most beautiful names."" The obvious question is, "So can He be known or not?" The second plain question is, "Do not the most beautiful names require creaturely conceptions to be understood? If so, how are the "names," which are not beyond "time and space" because they need time and space to be understood, a pathway to understanding He who is beyond time and space?" Kateregga and Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 88. Kateregga states, "According to the true teaching of Islam, God is not to be conceived in an anthropomorphic way." The question here is, "How can Allah be said to be dissimilar then? Does not dissimilarity entail being "other," which is properly predicable of humans? Thus, dissimilarity is anthropomorphic. Ghamidi, Islam, chap. 1, sec. 1, subsec. i. Kindle. Regarding the "being of Allah," Ghamidi states: "The reason is that this means can only be employed if the thing which is compared and likened to is found in some form or the other in a person's imagination or in the world around him. Man has no such data within or outside him regarding God's being. Thus, this means too can be of no use in this regard." He then cites Surah 16:74 to substantial this.

does not do the same, but it does not weight dissimilarity to near the degree that *Tanzīh*

prescribes. Without losing sight of Allah being "beyond the cosmos," *Tanzīh* stresses Allah's

uniqueness, or difference, mightily. The following discussing pays attention to it accordingly.

Anyone who proclaims *Tawḥīd* entails viewing Allah as ontologically other. Uniqueness

supposes others by which to account for the differences that ground uniqueness. Difference, then,

is always necessary for any uniqueness, and in some cases the terms are synonyms. Allah,

however, is undifferentiated before creation, and there certainly is not external differentiation

either. Is Allah dependent on creation for differentiation? How is Allah's uniqueness so "beyond

the creation" when it takes creation to ground the difference necessary for it? Said differently, to

predicate the attribute of "difference" to Allah is only possible by creation. What is seen here is

that difference — a necessary part of *Tawḥīd* (Surah 112) — is only made possible by creation.

Therefore, the *Tanzīh* of Allah's *Tawḥīd* does not achieve what some Muslims hope. It aims to

distance, that is, make Allah dissimilar from creation and human creatures. Instead, *Tanzīh* likens

Allah to creation since differentiation only occurs with creation. The quality of difference is

similar to both Allah and creation, each in relation to the other, but such difference is only

possible via creation since Allah, in and of Himself, is unipersonal and undifferentiated.

A point already intimated is that *Tanzīh*, when conjoined to Allah's unicity, exacerbates

the intractable dilemma noted earlier — the dualism obtaining by a creature's affirmation of

Tawḥīd. The major problem with this dualism is the "different," which it introduces. *Tanzīh*

cannot obtain without difference, and such difference cannot obtain without creation. Because

Allah is utterly unique (*Tanzīh*), He can have no external associates.[272] Because He is one

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[272] Nothing and no one created (external to Allah) can be associated with Him so as to be worshiped along
with Him.

(*Tawḥīdic*), He can have no internal (to Himself) associates. *Tanzīh* must therefore be handled in light of the ontological reality the term describes, as relative to creation inasmuch as it supposes difference.[273] Should *Tawḥīd* have *Tanzīh* removed from it? If this analysis is right, then, yes, it should be removed as a legitimate description if *Tawḥīd* is meant to describe Allah eternally, not just temporally.

The first pillar of Islam (focused on the first clause of the *Shahadah* or Surah 112), for Muslims holding to radical transcendence, is itself the ontological violation of which it seeks to protect against. Through a creature's affirmation of *Tawḥīd*, if creatures are true others, "difference" is demonstrably real. This makes the *dissimilarity* prescribed by *Tawḥīd* relative to creation and, therefore, impossible without creation. Hence, if *Tawḥīd* entails *Tanzīh*, it cannot be eternally true of Allah. The Sufi concern over generations about "dualism" obtaining and violating *Tawḥīd* is valid. The "different" introduced by cosmological dualism, which is strongly implied in a creature's affirmation of *Tawḥīd* as deposited in Surah 112, likens Allah to creation rather than distances Him from it. No wonder Islamic writers like Ibn 'Arabī and Al-Ghazālī found it necessary to lean towards understanding creation as illusory. The other way to avoid the dualism is to suppose that creation is some kind of emanational extension of Allah's Existence. It is not at all clear, though, how Allah is so distinct when the ontological gap between Creator and creation is crossed by the unitary bridge of divine-existence/creaturely-existence.[274] If this is so, Allah's transcendence becomes convertible with/to Allah's immanence in His undifferentiated identity with what *appears* to be external contingent reality.

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[273] In other words, this is not only a semantic problem but a real ontological issue.

[274] Burrell, "Creation," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 144 – 145. This is the irresolvable problem: "[A]ny pretension to have articulated the founding relation [between *Tawḥīd* and creation] adequately will have reduced that relation to one comprehensible to us, and so undermine and nullify the distinction expressed by *Tawḥīd*, the heart of this tradition."

Would the act of creation, thereby making Allah a "different One," impose on His identity? Allah's identity would no longer be a unicity wholly apart from all notions of difference as would be the case prior to creation, when there was no "difference" inside or outside of Allah. Instead, He is now a different One among other different ones, but this was not the case before creation. The *Shahadah*, Surah 112, and the classical Islamic attribute of dissimilarity, all point to Allah's difference as a chief attribute. If it could only be a divine attribute once Allah created, how could Allah's *Tawḥīdic* identity, being eternal and unchanging, be linked to creation in this way? Unless creation is somehow eternal, then Allah's attribute of dissimilarity could not obtain until the act of creation, at which time Allah would have something from which to be different. If creation is eternal in the same way Allah is eternal, then affirming it as contingent is ruled out, and two eternal realities exist: Allah and the creation. The larger difficulty is the question, "How can *Tawḥīdic* Allah (Monad) create anything differentiated from Himself in the first place?[275] To be One is to be only One, not many and not One among many. The final phrase of Surah 112, "And there is none like unto Him," could be clarified with the additional phrase, suggested by this analysis, "And there is none like unto Him," *except in the difference all things have from Him and His difference from them, in which they are the same*. The mode or how the difference is structured may differ, but the function of difference in distinguishing Allah from creatures and creatures from Allah is univocally the same. The predicate "other" entailed in "difference" is univocally true of both Allah and creatures in at least the sense of "distinct from" that the term "other" entails. Of course, this assumes creatures to be actual contingent others, which might not be an Islamic doctrine of creation in the final analysis.

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[275] I owe this insight to Dr. John Morrison.

There is a semantic problem as well. Only creaturely analogies are available to Muslims in all their religious formulations about Allah; this is even more pronounced due to the Qur'an's use of creaturely language to describe Him (e.g., "ascending the throne"). How is it proper to use creaturely things to describe what is beyond all creaturely things, i.e., *Tawḥīd*?[276] Further, how does the affirmation of *Tawḥīd* maintain its status as an affirmation, staying clear of vacuity? The plurality of creation exacerbates the problem of affirming Allah's uniqueness because of the rather obvious difference of the creaturely realm of multiplicity.[277] There is no human existing that is not within a pluralized environment of both things and persons.[278] So do Muslims have any analogy whatsoever to give real substance to this uniqueness of Allah?[279] Is the only way open the *via negativa* with its associated agnosticizing pressure? Thus, affirming Allah's unicity (oneness) is complicated by His transcendence (distinctness) since there is nowhere in all creation from whence to derive such a concept; if there is, then Allah's distinction was really not

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[276] Al-Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief*, 1st treatise, sec. 1, 10th proposition. Kindle. Commenting on how "one" can point to something's utter uniqueness, he says, "'Being one' might also be used to indicate that the thing has no analogue of its kind, as we say that the sun is one. The Creator (Exalted is He) is also one in this sense. There is no counterpart to Him." The question here is what does Al-Ghazālī mean by "analogue." He has just finished discussing how analogies can be used by scholars, but not the populace, to understand and "apprehend" God.

[277] Ibid. While discussing Allah having no counterpart, Al-Ghazālī states that "If every difference is removed, multiplicity is necessarily removed, and hence unity is necessitated." Can men truly imagine a singularity like Allah given their creaturely situatedness? Al-Ghazālī had just used an analogy of a man to make this point: "If it were permissible to say that they are two things without there being any difference between them, then it would be permissible to point to a man and say that he is two men, or even ten, but that they are identical and parallel in qualities, place, all accidents, and all necessary conditions without distinction." This analysis seems largely right within the framework of traditional (Aristotelian) metaphysics. What the Christian revelation of God as Trinity questions is the *archē* or *principium* of identity and relationship. Said differently, the Christian revelation of God as Trinity suspects, following Christianity's own hermeneutic of suspicion, that properties (qualities) belonging to an individual man can never be properties isolated from other men. All men stand in relationships to other men, and for any individual man there is some set of relational circumstances that contributes to the properties to men, perhaps even (it is possible) proportional dynamism. The point in unphilosophical terms is that any analysis of man without the consideration of other men's influence upon that man is to never have actually started an analysis of man in the first place. Is Ghazālī's deliberation about the nature of Allah's oneness all too human, a severe anthropomorphism, since using such a blatant human analogy? Or worse, is this idealistic anthropomorphizing a case of obfuscation since man, evaluated in traditional philosophical terms, is always more than the reductions imposed upon it by an overly "materialistic" or "substantial" anthropological metaphysic?

[278] Further, it might be wondered if there is anything that is not internally differentiated as well.

[279] Burrell CSC, "Creation," *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 142.

a distinction worthy of the Creator.[280] Are we returning again to the *via negativa*? If reality is seen as an extension of Allah's existence, then somehow the multiplicity of existence is distinct from Allah although subsisting in His existence. If, however, creation is put forward on Islam as truly contingent, the affirmation of *Tawḥīd* continues the problem: "The stumbling-block which *Tawḥīd* becomes as one tries to render it conceptually may be identified by its sharp edges: everything which is not God comes forth from God yet cannot exist without God, so how are they distinct when they cannot be separated?"[281]

There is another issue regarding "otherness" as well, which is tied to difference.[282] If a creature is offset against Allah as a genuine "another," then perhaps there is a terminological analogy since being "another" would analogously coordinate with Allah being the "Other."[283] There would be "one-and-anotherness." This semantic point looks back to the earlier ontological point that creation is necessary for Allah to become "Another." It is, however, this type of anthropomorphizing that Islam is voraciously against.[284] The "one-and-another" phrase, and actuality of it, is only possible with creation, which means predicating "other" to Allah owes to creation. Is "otherness," therefore, properly only a creaturely predicate? A basis for

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[280] Someone might object that a singularity can be imagined by the cognitive process of abstractizing that property. This objection will not work because it assumes plurality in the process of abstractizing singularity. A human mind apprehends some object, which makes two things, the human and the thing observed. Then, the human mind abstractizes from that object to the imagined idea of a lone singularity. There are always two things in this processs, not one, which makes knowing oneness apart from this pluarity impossible.

[281] Ibid.

[282] It is not being suggested that "otherness" and "difference" are different categories as much as thinking on these terms separately suggests either more or less personal essence. "Difference" seems to be a term that is more readily used of non-persons whereas "otherness" pertains more directly to persons. Admittedly, my connotations might be due to more of my bias than to these terms taking these connotations in all times and contexts. Terms connoting otherness are "other, another, foreign, alien," and perhaps more.

[283] But this would reduce the Creator and creation distinction.

[284] Al-Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief*, 1ˢᵗ treatise, sec. 1, 9ᵗʰ proposition. Kindle. "The Ḥashawites affirm direction for God, trying to avoid nullifying His attributes; they end up anthropomorphizing . . . ." Kateregga and Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 2 and 88; Rauf, *Islam: Creed and Worship*, 2 – 3.

understanding Allah's transcendence requires understanding Him as "Another," does it not? The terms connoting otherness, and the realities they represent, are soundly creaturely on Islam. All otherness would arrive at and through creation. The "otherness" realities, and the terms used to refer to those realities, take their *principium* at the time Allah says "be." To appropriate the terminology of "other/another" to Allah emphatically represents the method of improper anthropomorphizing disapproved by major segments of Muslims. If "otherness" were disapproved and banned under anti-anthropomorphizing, then all seemingly contingent reality is really One, either by emanation or by illusion. Is there a way forward apart from shear fideism to *parts of* the Qur'anic revelation that creation is contingent? There is a very real problem of how to ground "distinction" and "otherness" by the doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah before creation.

Transcendence (*Tanzīh*) or Allah's distinctness is applicable from the beginning of creation, as outlined formerly. Although contested among Muslim scholars themselves, maybe the Qur'an (eternal divine Speech) or Allah's attributes can ground "distinction" before creation.[285] Both the attributes of Allah and the Qur'an are to be identified with Him, although distinguishable from His essence — distinguishable by whom is the imperative question. These last two sentences might be seriously repudiated by Muslims themselves since such a

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[285] Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief*, 1st treatise, sec. 1, 9th proposition. Kindle. "It is known that positing such a perfection in clarity and illumination is not impossible regarding the known existents that cannot be visualized, such as knowledge, power, God's essence, His attributes, and so forth. In fact, we almost apprehend that our nature by necessity seeks more clarity in comprehending God's essence, His attributes, and the essences of all these known things. We say that this is not impossible; there is nothing that renders it impossible. Indeed, the intellect proves that it is possible and, furthermore, that our nature seeks it." "For this ignorance is ignorance of an attribute of God's essence, since, for them, seeing God is an impossibility that is due to His essence and to His not being located in a direction. Yet, how is it possible that Moses (peace be upon him) did not know that God was not located in a direction, or that he knew that God was not located in a direction but did not know that seeing what has no direction is impossible?" Ayoub, *Islam Faith and History*, chap. 2, sec. 3. "Muslims believe that God, in his essence, is unknowable, inconceivable. He is above all categories of time and space, form and number, or any other material or temporal attributions. Yet he can be known through his attributes, called in the Qur'ān "God's most beautiful names."" The challenge for Ayoub is to maintain Allah's unicity in view of the multiplicity of His names.

"distinguishing" is suggestive of a violation of the oneness of *Tawḥīd*, introducing some composition. It would be better to think of the distinguishing as an activity of human cognition, needing to process in categories He who is infinite because the human mind is finite. Nevertheless, Islam does not allow for internal differentiation in Allah, which means the Qur'an (as eternal Speech) and the attributes must be retractable to the divine essence, or simple oneness, of Allah.[286] Given that such a retraction occurs to avoid multiplicity, does this divest Allah of His attributes? Moreover, how then is "distinction" to be grounded in Allah before creation? Further, there is clearly zero foundation for personal distinctness — between persons — in Allah prior to creation. If creation is understood in illusory, panentheistic, or pantheistic terms, then personal distinctness has no grounding after Allah's so-called creating. If all is illusory or somehow Allah, then why bother speaking about this in terms of creation? Trying to make a case of how to ground distinction in Allah in positive terms proves to be a considerable problem. Perhaps it is best to follow Islamic apophaticism. Is the *via negativa* the only way open? There is nothing like Him; one can only say what He is not. There is no grounding of distinction before creation in Allah. The development of historic Islamic thought — Al-Ghazālī, Ibn 'Arabī, and Ibn Taymīyya's movement towards Existence/existence as monolithically connected or in monist framework — implies the importance of this consideration when trying to advance the Creator/creation relationship in Islam.

<center>Relatedness</center>

With the explanations accomplished in the first two sections on oneness and distinctness, this section on relatedness does not require quite as much space. The possibility of Islam being considered binitarian monotheism can also be left behind since *Tawḥīd* demands oneness, both in

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[286] Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Maqṣad*, 15. He says that "the thing qualified by all of them [the attributes] is the essence."

unicity and uniqueness. This unicity of Allah is also indicative of a unipersonal identity.

Although Muslim scholars can point to Allah's infinite nature for the multiplicity of creation,

this does not substantially account for the multiplicity of personal entities, whether angels, jinn,

or humans. Although Allah's power, mercy, knowledge, and so forth can be imagined as an

infinite interval of endless extension, this cannot be the case for the personal identity of Allah.

Morevoer, the creation of multiplicity by *Tawḥīdic* infinite Allah is uncannily strange. His

infinity cannot admit differentiation without the violation of *Tawḥīd*. Allah's infinity does not

provide a principle or foundation for personal differentiation or otherness since He is surely

One.[287] *Shirk* guarantees, as does the Qur'anic revelation, that He is one, alone, and solitary.[288]

No one else may be associated with Him.

Thinking about Allah alone before creation, there is no otherness, and so, no relatedness.

There is reflexive relatedness, but this is a vortex that always excludes anyone or anything else.

Hence, any dimension of relating that might be considered, the conclusion will always involve an

exclusion of the other. Under *Tawḥīd*, the conclusion follows necessarily. Nothing is but Allah.

Allah is unipersonal. Allah relates, *ergo*, Allah reflexively relates. This leads us to the conclusion

that relatedness in Islam is grounded in reflexive relatedness that does not include another

(thinking without creation). Some Muslim theologians have made use of the Augustinian

formula for the Trinity: God is lover, beloved, and love.[289] This is not necessarily objectionable.

When used for Allah, the formula becomes equivocal from its meaning when applied to the

Trinity. When appropriated to Allah, the one person (uniperson) is the Actor of the love, the

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[287] Does Allah's infinite nature ground plurality or multiplicity? Infinite is after all a negative concept: "not finite."

[288] Ajijola, *The Essence of Faith*; Qutb, *Milestones*, 68.

[289] Al-Daylami, *Kitab 'aft al-alif al-ma'luf 'ala 'l-lam al-ma'tuf*, ed. J. C. Vadet (Cairo: Imprimerie de I'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1962), 24 – 28, cited in Bell, *Love Theory*, 72.

Object of His love, and the Concurrence of the activity of His love. Allah's loving activity is cyclonic, always leaving Allah (as Lover), centered on Allah (as Beloved), and the "winds" of that love is always Allah (as Love).

If a theory of how humans are "persons," or become "truly human," should be put forward on Islam's doctrine of Allah, then Allah as unipersonal is the antitype by which to adjudicate on what is truly "personal." Allah's *Tawḥīd* is a personalizing framework by which an Islamic anthropology might be understood. To be alone, therefore, would be a guideline of becoming truly human, as truly a vicegerent under *Rabb* Allah. Society would be a barrier to becoming human, a true "person," since all such "others" in this society would invade the necessary solitude for becoming human or "a person." Despite the alarming inferences — those surely inimical to the importance of human relatedness and community — that could be drawn from this, there is the larger matter of how this relates to the Qur'an.

These ideas are surely against the Qur'anic revelation, which emphasizes how humans should live together in an Islamic world. These ideas are nevertheless not against a theology of anthropology derived from Allah's ontology as unipersonal. Therefore, there is an obvious rift between what it means for Allah to be a "person" and what it means for a human to be a "person" or "*mia Hypostasis*" if the Qur'an's teaching on human community is placed vis-à-vis Allah's nature. The real problem with this is that the Qur'an is viewed as Allah's uncreated Speech, and must be somehow representative of Him; if it is not largely or wholly so, how does *shirk* not occur? Thinking of what it means to be a human person from Allah's *Tawḥīd* (ontology of solitude; unipersonal) is at odds with thinking what it means to be a human person from Allah's Speech (Qur'an). Thus the Qur'an would teach not to be like Allah (i.e., solitary). Another way to look at this is to say that humans are not to be like Allah as He is in Himself, that

is, immanently or without creation, but to be like Allah as He is in relationship to creation. This results in the concerning conclusion that Allah — the Author of all personality, persons, and the personalizing One — tells humans to be opposite how Allah is in Himself and how Allah was before He created. If this is the case, how is there any real confidence that following the Qur'an guides humanity (human persons in community) into true "godly" community? The Author of humanity — who evidently made humanity like Himself, corroborated via anthropomorphisms as demonstrable from the Qur'an itself — has a self-identity differently constituted, namely, without reference or in relationship to others. Humanity formed around the Qur'an might guide them into Qur'anic revelatorily formed humanity. This, however, could not guide humanity into "godliness" since Allah is clearly unipersonal, solitary, and alone. He is always alone in His ultimacy as *the* One. Although the Qur'an guides humans into a community of Islam (submission), it does not guide humanity into "godliness" in the strict sense of becoming like Allah. Instead, the Qur'an as Allah's Speech guides humanity into being "ungodly" by ensuring that human persons' identities always subsist in a way that is totally dissimilar to Allah (immanently conceived). Humans as persons are "persons in community" while Allah's "Personhood" is always opposite that, namely, alone without community. It would be blasphemous for Muslims to say that Allah's "Personhood" depended on creation. The blasphemous nature of this derives from making something as essential as Allah's Personhood unable to stand alone. In such a case, who Allah is becomes continually linked to something outside of Himself. Furthermore, it is impossible to link an eternal Being's Personhood to something that is not eternal, not without undermining this eternal Being's (Allah) Personhood altogether.[290] The disallowance of this linking, consequently, removes any possibility of

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[290] If Allah's personhood is linked to something created, something that becomes, then His personhood is an emergent property.

constructing Allah's Personhood together with creation since it would make Him interdependent on it for His Personhood.[291]

Allah as the Author of all persons is presented through anthropomorphisms to be some measure of an antitype for humanity as persons.[292] Allah's *Tawḥīd*, namely, Allah's nature as unipersonal and alone, stands antithetical to humanity as persons in relationships. Moreover, Allah's eternal Speech (Qur'an) teaches an anthropology that is ungrounded in Allah's "Personhood." It is in this sense that the Qur'an begins to look more and more like a "true other" next to Allah, nervously suggesting *shirk*. The tension between humanity being like Allah (attributes; anthropomorphisms) but guided by the Qur'an to not be like Him is ripe with difficulties. Here again, the monist schemas of Ibn Taymīyya, Al-Ghazālī, and Ibn 'Arabī between Existence and existence are attractive options. If all are one, then the unipersonal nature of Allah is not compromised by Allah's creating (or better imagining); furthermore, if all are one, the Qur'an's guiding humanity to be persons in community is only a wisp of fog appearing as multiplicity for a time, later overtaken by the truth of Allah's *Tawḥīd*. The Qur'an, then, would not counsel humanity to be other than Allah, but only provide guidance to humanity during their apparent stay, however falsely substantial it may seem, as community. The Qur'an could just be a "brief word" of Allah on how to function during this apparition of community/humanity until the time of "extinction in unity."

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[291] This would be much like the "becoming god" of Heidegger (esp. Hegel) or the intra-creation god of the process theologians.

[292] It should not be missed that the thirteen attributes ascribed to Allah are shared with humanity but subsist in creatures in a creaturely way.

Conclusion

Salient points from the above analysis abound. First, *Tawḥīd* denotes singularity and uniqueness. There can be no internal or external differentiation contributing to the identity of Allah. This is obvious precreation.

Second, Allah's *Tawḥīd*, in view of creation, attempts to protect against allowing external differentiation from being included in Allah. Depending on the author or sect considered, there is more or less success in protecting the pure separation of Allah from creation. *Hulul* (indwelling) even in Ibn Taymīyya was suggestive of panentheism.

Third, maybe the biggest issue was the introduction of the "different" by creation as a truly contingent creation. If it was not truly contingent, then existence comes from the existence of Allah as either more (per Ibn 'Arabī) or less (per Al-Ghazālī) illusory. Is Allah's identity in a quest of becoming the "Different One" among "different ones?" All "otherness" would be entirely constituted by creation, not by being inherent in Allah. How could *Tawḥīdic* Allah bring forth otherness from *Tawḥīd*? There is no internal logic in the theology proper of Allah that explains difference, otherness, or one-and-anotherness. Otherness is not any mimesis or reflection of who Allah was precreation, but, rather, is in *antithesis* to who He was precreation. It is hard to see how Allah's identity, being known by all creatures on the basis of the "Allah other than me," can be understood in His attributes by anything that implies difference. Even Allah's own self-knowledge would no longer be "the lone God utterly without otherness" but "the lone God distinct from others." The problem is not that Allah is distinct from something new, but that He has a new "quality of being distinct" introduced by His relationship to creation. Any attributes of Allah that imply difference cannot be eternal since difference does not exist in

undifferentiated *Tawḥīdic* Allah. The same would go for any attributes that imply relationships as well.

Fourth, even if Allah's identity is not shaken, how is describing Allah as the "dissimilar One" not guilty of describing Allah's by a term that is altogether creaturely, having no basis in Allah before creation? What this means is that the *Tawḥīdic* nature of Allah does not ground "otherness." In other words, although creaturely realities are part of coming to know things about the Deity (per chap. 2), do these creaturely realities also convey something univocally true of the Deity? If the term does not, but it is applied to the Deity, then this is a case of idolatry. Is not this occurring by claiming Allah to be "other?" Is not using the term "dissimilarity" to describe Allah the worse sort of making the Creator like the creation, even idolatry? Otherness is actualized by creation, so should not "dissimilarity" be highest on the list of prohibited terms for describing Allah? Instead, we find that it is one of His thirteen essential attributes. How can this be so? Furthemore, how does Islam avoid the accusation of agnosticizing their own religion by those Muslims claiming that Allah is "utterly other" than all else in creation. If He is not known by means of created terms and concepts, He will not be know at all (cf. chap. 2).

Fifth, the human creature who proclaims *Tawḥīd* as a real "other" manifests a true "difference" of this creature from the Creator. Since the whole notion of "the different" has no grounding in Allah, the proclamation establishes an intractable dualism. "Difference" is constituted by creation, but *Tawḥīd* (Surah 112; *Shahadah*) aims to distance Allah from creation. All such attempts to affirm Allah's uniqueness from creation only serve to remove that uniqueness by attributing to Him an attribute *wholly* creaturely, namely, the attribute of "otherness" or "dissimilarity." As noted earlier, imagining "another" is not an ontological grounding for "others" as truly "distinct." Instead, imagining "others" only serves to show how

unreal they are as "true others" since these imagined "others" remain in the fabric of thought only as long as a mind imagines them. This is just another example of the problem of the One and the Many.

Sixth, the semantic problem of how to name Allah's *Tawḥīd* showed that it is hard to find a suitable analogy in creation. Even the *via negativa* has been removed as an effective retreat for Muslims since appealing to Allah as being "wholly different" or "wholly Other" only shows Allah to not be "wholly different" precisely in the fact that He differs like creatures differ, and such a difference is only made possible by the actualization of creation. Further, does affirming Allah's radical distinction become merely a phonetic act divested of its significance? Not only is He not utterly other, but a concrete occurrence of a singularity in a non-pluralized context is not available in creation. Creation, instead, manifests unities in diversities. Is a proclamation of *Tawḥīd* really an abstract and somewhat vacuous affirmation as Sufis have feared?

Seventh, without difference, reality is illusory. This option has a long history and powerful Islamic figures to represent it. Given the great many problems noted above, understanding all things as really just the One is quite attractive. To hold that reality is just an apparition demands a certain betrayal of realism or the intuitive immediacy of humans' daily experience.

These analyses on oneness, distinctness, and relatedness will be reviewed and paratactically compared with the same in Christianity in the final chapter of this dissertation. The next chapter, however, will perform the same task as here but in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity. The fruit from this will then be set next to the data garnered above. This conclusive chapter, following the next, will weigh how well each religions' doctrine of the Deity accounts

for human relationships and their ubiquity. After this comparative endeavor, final comments will

be made towards the broad range of relevancies projected from the work here undertaken.

CHAPTER 4: ON THE TRINITY

Introduction

The Christian Tradition, through the rigorous conversations and deliberations of the church fathers, made explicit the inherent teaching of Scripture on the Trinity in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 C.E.).[293] Much that is necessary for the construction of Trinitarian theology is either explicitly or implicitly mentioned within this Creed. Also, Gregory the Theologian oversaw the Second Ecumenical Council, whose proceedings led to this Creed and the clear affirmation of the Holy Spirit's divinity — it was Gregory Nazianzen who first applied *homoousion* to the Holy Spirit.[294] For the purposes here, the two most important lines from this Creed are about the Son and the Spirit.

> Καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς γεννηθέντα πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων· φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοούσιον τῷ Πατρί, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. . . .
> Καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ κύριον, τὸ ζῳοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον . . . .

The foci are the begetting by the Father "before all the ages," that the Son is "true God from true God," and especially that the Son is "*homoousion* (same being, or essence) to the Father." The Spirit is called the Creator in a finely nuanced way by means of the Greek *zōopoion*, which could be translated literally as "life-maker" or "maker of life" although the English of the Creed in the "Prayers at the Assembly" and the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) use "giver of life."[295] Furthermore, the Spirit is worshiped and glorified in oneness with the Son and the

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[293] The full creed can be found online. "The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed," *Antiochain Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North American*, 2000 – 2013, accessed May 15, 2014, www.antiochian.org/674.

[294] Gregory Nazianzen, *Fifth Theological Oration* [Oration 31], bk. 10.

[295] Liddell and Scott, "ζῳοποιεω," in *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon*, 7th ed., E-book ed. (Logos Bible Software, 2014); "Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed," *Together at One Altar*, National Catholic Education Commission, 2014, accessed May 15, 2014, http://www.togetheratonealtar.catholic.edu.au/receive/dsp-content.cfm?loadref=78; "The Nicene Creed," *The ELLC Texts; A Survey of Use and Variation*, Worldwide Usage

Father. To worship anyone but God is prohibited according to Scripture. The "with" (Gr.: συν-; sun-) appended to the Greek words *proskunoumenon* and *doxazomenon* points to the essential oneness of the Three *Hypostaseis*. There are no "gaps of separation" between the *Hypostaseis*, so to worship and glorify the Spirit entails "with-worshiping" (συμπροσκυνούμενον) and "with-glorifying" (συνδοξαζόμενον) the Father and Son." The divinity, or *ousia* of, the three *Hypostaseis* is not in doubt although how to work this out has been heavily debated. This Creed is an enduring marker of orthodox Christianity because there is no more succinct statement of the Christian doctrine of God that was ecumenically accepted. The doctrine of the Trinity presented hereafter will remain within the parameters set by this Creed, within the boundaries of Scripture, and assisted from the Athanasian Creed (500 C.E.).[296] This later Creed was not ecumenical, but abides in the boundaries established by the orthodoxy of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed.

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of the Revised Common Lectionary, 2007, accessed May 15, 2014, http://www.englishtexts.org/survey.html#thenicenecreed.

[296] The title of the Creed suggests that it was first outlined (?) by the great defender of Christology and early Trinitarianism, St. Athanasius. Some think this title is a misnomer, and, rather, it ought to be titled after its first Latin words: *Quicunque Vult* ("whoever wishes"). These words are followed by *salvus esse* ("to be saved"). Letham thinks this latter title is better than the "Athanasian Creed." Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 186. For access to the Creed in English, Fordham University provides it online. "Medieval Sourcebook: Quicumque Vult, or The Creed of St. Athanasius," Fordham University: The Jesuit University of New York, August 1998, accessed March 31, 2014, www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/quicumque.asp. The important line, in Latin, from this Creed on the Spirit's relationship to the Father and Son can be contested as ambiguous: *Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio: non factus, nec creates, nec genitus, sed procedens*. "The Holy Spirit is from/of the Father and the Son: not made, neither created nor begotten, but proceeding" (trans. mine). The Latin word "a," translated as "from/of" above represents a long seated tension between the Eastern Church and Western Church, sparked by the uncatholic (non-universal) insertion of the *filioque* clause into the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 C.E.); the Council of Toledo (589 C.E.) records this intrusion. The *filioque* clause was not original to the Creed, but was added by the Western Church without the consent of the East. Thus, what was developed and affirmed ecumenically (catholically/universally) was changed uncatholically, or, said differently in modern political rhetoric, what was a bipartisan affirmation was changed to suit a partisan agenda, without unity to the opposite party together with whom the Creed developed. Scripture says that the Spirit is sent both by the Father and the Son, and it records Jesus directly giving it to His disciples by breathing on them (John 20:22). I am sympathetic to the Eastern view on this and opposed to the Western view because of John 14:16, 14:26, 16:7, and 16: 13 – 15. Jesus shows deference (due to order, not superiority) to the Father by asking Him to send another Advocate to the disciples in 14:16. This asking highlights Jesus' mediatorial role between God and man and underscores how Jesus can be said to send the Spirit in 16:7. Jesus, further and *a fortiori*, recognizes and adopts this advocate/mediator title for Himself by saying that "another Advocate" will be sent. Whatever Jesus' sending of the Spirit involves, it cannot oppose or deny that Jesus' sending entails asking the Father. In Greek, using *hupo* and *dia* could convey how the Spirit is send both by the Father and the Son while retaining the primacy of the Father in the divine *taxis* ("order"): *To Hagion Pneuma pempetai hupo Patrou dia*

The following discussion of the Trinity attempts to remain true to the orthodoxy established in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and elaborated by the Athanasian Creed.[297] Christian esotericism or special pleading is a real danger when the Trinity is presented beyond superficial explanations. It is hoped that presenting the Trinity within the boundaries of the creedal formulations will avoid either of these problems. Since aiming to stay within these Creeds' demarcations is the goal, sources will range from ancient to modern, always with an eye to explain the doctrine of the Trinity by the Creeds' parameters.[298]

The Trinity's oneness is the area of greatest contention between Islam and Christianity. This is for good reason because the analyses of the Trinity's distinctness and intra-relatedness hinges on the nature of this oneness. This was a similar consequence in the last chapter on Allah's oneness (*Tawḥīd*). Kateregga notes strongly the Muslim sentiment about Allah's essential lone-oneness: "So, because [Allah] is one, no one else can share even an atom of His divine power and authority. [Allah] alone possesses the attributes of Divinity. . . . to associate any being with God is both a sinful and infidel act."[299] All Muslims do not share the potency of this repudiation. Miroslav Volf comments on the Athanasian Creed's refusal to divide the divine essence, looking to "Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a preeminent contemporary Muslim philosopher,

Huiou ("The Holy Spirit is sent by the Father through/by the Son"; Greek construction and trans. mine). *Hupo* points to source while *dia* shows intermediate agency; this construction still has its own Trinitarian complications in view of the correct stance that the divine *Monarchia* should be predicated of all the Persons in the Trinity so that each Person is *autotheos* (God in Himself). John 16:14 – 15 is important in constructing the divine *taxis*.

[297] It might be thought that the Christian doctrine of God is being treated more carefully than the Islamic doctrine of Allah by using this universally accepted Creed (Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed). If Islam had a similar universal Creed that clarified how to understand Allah and His relationship to creation, it would be used, but such does not exist to my knowledge. There are some creeds, reports Binyamin Abrahamov, but there is not a consensus among them. Onc creed holds creation to be absolutely separate from Allah. Binyamin Abrahamov, "Appendix 1: The Creed of Abū Zurʿa ʿubaydallāh ibn ʿabd Al-Karīm al-Rāzī (D. 264/878) and Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Rāzī (D. 277/890)," in *Islamic Theology: Traditionalism and Rationalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), 54 – 55.

[298] Due to the ecumenical acceptance of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, remaining consistent with it in what following is more important than to the Athanasian Creed.

[299] Kateregga and Shenk, *Islam and Christianity*, 2.

[who] agrees: 'The doctrine of the Trinity certainly does not negate Divine Unity in mainstream Christian theology.'"[300] Volf is particularly irenic in his appraisal of the Qur'an's correction and denunciation of the putative Trinity. He sees it as correcting misconceptions held by certain "misguided Christians."[301] There is little doubt that Muslims and Christians agree about the unity of the Deity's essence, that it neither can be divided nor is it compounded. The nature of that unity, however, is where Muslims and Christians part ways.[302] Volf is not unaware of this tension. He reports that the director of Kalam Research and Media in Dubai, Aref Nayed, says that Muslims must reject the entirety of the Athanasian Creed.[303] James White noted that Surah 5:72 – 73 calls ascribing divinity to the Messiah (Jesus) both unbelief (*kuhr*) and idolatry (*shirk*).[304] Volf and White therefore make clear the contention about the oneness of the Deity, which influences, as in the last chapter, how to understand distinctness and relatedness. To honor the specificities proper to both Allah and the Trinity, the dissimilarities between Them reign, which are presented in the final chapter.[305]

Oneness

Appropriately, it is impossible to speak of only the Trinity's oneness without necessarily speaking of God's distinctions and relationships internal to Himself. It is possible to bracket out *ousia* for analysis, but *ousia* must also denote the unitary connection of the *homoousia* proper to each *Hypostasis* and thereby perichoretically intra-relate the *Hypostaseis* One to Another, and

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[300] Volf, *Allah*, 135; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "We and You: Let Us Meet in God's Love," a lecture delivered at the "Common Word" meeting with Pope Benedict XVI, Nov. 6, 2008, 2.

[301] Volf, *Allah*, 143.

[302] Christopher Evan Longhurst, "Tawḥīd and Homooúsios: Narrowing the Gaps Between Muslim and Christian Understanding of God's Divine Oneness," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 2 (March 1, 2013): 256.

[303] Volf, *Allah*, 131.

[304] James White, *What Every Christian Need to Know*, Chap. 3, sec. 2. Kindle.

[305] Speaking of both Allah and the Trinity as real and separate Deities is for the sake of the argument, not because this could be an actual states-of-affairs.

not merely *inter*relate Them. Because of this, the first section on oneness is longer, and it touches upon distinctness and relatedness as well. As a result, the sections on distinctness and relatedness are shorter and involve a certain amount of recapitulation of what is said in this section on oneness. That this section on oneness is longer might be all for the best since defending Christianity as Trinitarian monotheism is paramount. The significance of this Trinitarian presentation has consequences both for Christianity's coherency and towards rebutting Muslim accusations that Christianity is not monotheism.

Christian theology's articulation of the Trinity ultimately refused the ancient philosophico-metaphysical speculations about the cosmological origin.[306] The doctrine of the Trinity showed that the only supposed options of either taking singularity or plurality as a starting point were not the only possible choices.[307] This is the problem of the one and the many. A starting point of a cosmological singularity expresses itself through history as an unending force bent on returning to the "one." Islam's doctrine of Allah shows sizable signs of such a bent. A beginning point of cosmological plurality resists the taming influence of unity, oneness, or homogeneity, and always desires to return to the chaotic diversity from whence it came. The doctrine of the Trinity proclaims that there are not just two choices: not just the choice *between* the unending flux of plurality forever assaulting those trying to tame the vicissitudes into contrived unities *or* the violence that always occurs in the subsuming of plurality to oneness, that

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[306] Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 180. "Theologically there is no value in speculation about ideal or metaphysical causes of difference, ontic or ontological; the triune perichoresis of God is not a substance in which difference is grounded in its principles or in which it achieves the unity of a higher synthesis, even if God is the fullness and actuality of all that is; rather, the truly unexpected implication of trinitarian dogma is that Christian thought has no metaphysics of the one and the many, the same and the different, because that is a polarity that has no place in the Christian narrative."

[307] Joseph Ratzinger [Pope Benedictine XVI], *Introduction to Christianity*, 128 – 129. ". . . the belief in the Trinity, which recognizes the plurality in the unity of God, is the only way to the final elimination of dualism as a means of expanding plurality alongside unity; only through this belief is the positive validation of plurality given a definite base. God stands above singular and plural. He bursts both categories."

is, taking oneness as *principium*, with difference only residing as an interruption and an illusory

disruption of singularity.[308] Provided the Trinity can be explained cogently, although not without

its *mysterium*, the Trinity has a definite edge in explaning the ongoing realities of unity in

diversity. God the Trinity explains the relationship between oneness and diversity as an original

peace, taking the immanent Trinity's intra-relationships as the substantial logic of how this is

possible.[309] The doctrine of the Trinity repudiates the false dilemma of either singularity or

plurality in favor of a doctrine of the one God who is internally differentiated.

The Trinity is three distinct *Hypostaseis*, but not "in such a way as to understand one

perfect nature compounded of three imperfect natures, but one simple essence, eminently and

antecedently perfect, in three Persons."[310] To recall chapter two, the *Hypostaseis* indicate "the

how" the one *ousia* of the Trinity exists while the *ousia* indicates "the what" of the Trinity. What

John Damascene cautions against is taking the "Persons/*Hypostaseis*" to Each possess three

natures ("the what") that can be compounded to produce the one *ousia*.[311] Due to the one *ousia*

of the Triune God, "the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit intimate a divine unity of one and

the same substance in an indivisible equality."[312] Therefore, God is One although never alone.[313]

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[308] Hart, "Part 1: Dionysus against the Crucified," in *The Beauty of the Infinite*. Few contemporary scholars have explored the utter rejection of ancient philosophy's most cherished formulations — along with their modern expressions — and demonstrated the Trinity's utter inversion of necessitarian logic in favor of reality's (creation's) gratuity better than Hart. Hart was building on John Milbank's thesis about so much of postmodern philosophy being essentially "violent" in his *Theology and Social Theory*. This work was viewed as controversial and far reaching, by Hart's account (29, 35 – 36). However, following Hart's devastating critique of ancient and modern metaphysics in light of the Trinity, the inherent correctness of Milbank's work has been largely demonstrated by Hart's dialogue, contribution, and extension of some of Milbank's major points. Milbank, "Ontological Violence or the Postmodern Problematic," in *Theology and Social Theory*. The entirety of the book bears on the topic.

[309] Both Milbank and Hart, per the above footnote, put forward the ontology of peace proper to God the Trinity, Milbank establishing and Hart extending this thought.

[310] St. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, bk. 1, chap. 8. John of Damascus refers to Basil. Basil, *Against the Sabellians, Arians, and Eunomians*, bk. 4.

[311] Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, 32 – 34. Zizioulas may well be right that "the how" must have equal ontological weight with "the what" to overcome the totalitarianism of subsuming the "other" to the "same."

[312] St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, bk. 1, chap. 4. Kindle.

Human cognitive abilities are finite and flawed, which requires a decision to be made about whether to start thinking on the Trinity from a position of oneness or Trinity. Fairbairn's advice to start "to think in terms of Three, who have always been in relationship one to another and who are united in such a way that they are a single God rather than three separate gods" is appealing for three reasons.[314]

First, the early chapters of Genesis point to differentiation in God's oneness.[315] The Hebrew ^{E}'lōhîm is plural, which when taken together with the singular verbs predicated of it intimates something of diversity when clarified later with the illumination that Jesus brought (Lk. 24:44).[316] Second, God's image bearers, Adam and Eve become "one" flesh (Gen. 2:24: Hebrew אֶחָד; 'eḥād), which is the same term predicated of ^{E}'lōhîm YHWH in Deuteronomy 6:4: אֱלֹהֵינוּ יהוה אֶחָד, ". . . your God YHWH is one" (אֶחָד).[317] Thirdly, Genesis 18:1 – 21 has been said to strongly

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[313] George, "The Trinity and the Challenge of Islam," in *God the Holy Trinity*, 126.

[314] Donald Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity: an Introduction to Theology with the Help of the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), chap. 3, sec. 3. Elsewhere in the same section Fairbairn claims that Augustine even started his thinking on Threeness rather than Oneness.

[315] Bruce Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: an exegetical, canonical, and themantic Approach* (Zondervan), chap. 8, sec. II, subsec. A. Kindle. Waltke and Yu recognize that the traditional way of taking the "Us" as a pronoun representational of God is to see it as pregnant with the Trinity. He concedes that "this view satisfies the canonical context superbly." He then claims "The canonical argument is true but violates the accredited grammatico-historical rules of interpretation." Taking the canonical approach as contrary to or opposed to the grammatico-historical approach — instead of viewing them as complementary — is to approach theological method with an imperialistic viewpoint. The biblical theological task is judged to "command" greater validity. This, of course, is precisely what Bernard Lonergan complains about. The biblical theological task is an obvious task that has to occur, but it has its role in the understanding and presentation of the Christian worldview. It does not domineer over the other theological tasks, but is part of the Christian theologian's many activities. Lonergan states, "My only concern is that there be recognized that the eight performances consist of eight different sets of operations directed to eight interdependent but distinct ends. This concern is, of course, a concern for method, a concern to obstruct the blind imperialism that selects some of the ends, insists on their importance, and neglects the rest." Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), chap. 7, sec. 8 and chap. 5, sec. 5. Kindle. The biblical, systematic, pragmatic, and dogmatic theological tasks are best understand as interdependent lest one domineer over the others.

[316] The verbs *br'* (ברא; "created"), *'mr* (אמר; "said"), and *r'h* (ראה; "saw") are all singular in verses 1, 3, and 4, respectively, predicated of אֱלֹהִים (plural of "God").

[317] Although *'eḥād* does not always refers to a oneness entailing diversity in the OT canon, the regularity of it connoting such diversity is not marginal: Gen. 1:5, 1:9, 4:19, 11:1, 11:6, and the list could continue well on. Comparatively, the Hebrew adjective, *yāḥîd* (יָחִיד) is uniform in its describing a solitary, only, or lone person or

intimate an Old Testament Trinity. This text should not be grouped together with other vaguer

intimations about diversity in unity from the Old Testament because it is far more explicit

(although still mysterious) than other Old Testament texts that bear on the question of the

Trinity. St. Augustine establishes the most important observation about this text, namely, that the

narrative starts out with YAHWEH appearing to Abraham under the oaks of Mamre, but, then,

there are three men.[318] After this, the narrative oscillates between YAHWEH being addressed in

the singular and the three men speaking singly to Abraham. However much mysteriousness is

maintained or however large the reservations, that YAHWEH revealed Himself to Abraham in a

manner conveying plurality is undeniable.[319] What is done with it from there is up for debate, but

the three men speaking together as one (vv. 5 and 9) demands serious thought in the light of

canonical intextuality towards the question of the Triune God in the Old Testament.[320] It may be

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thing. It occurs twelve times in the OT (compared to over nine hundred times for *'eḥād*) including the important chapter about Abraham sacrificing Isaac: Genesis 22:2, 12, 16, Judges 11:34, Jeremiah 6:26, Amos 8:10, Zechariah 12:10, Psalms 22:21, 25:16, 35:17, 68:7, and Proverbs 4:3. *'eḥād* in Deuteronomy is commonly used to describe "one" that belongs to a larger set. *'eḥād* can focus in on the differentiated whole or on one of the things/persons that constitute that diversity (cf. Deut. 4:42, 12:14, 13:13, 15:7, etc.). Many of these observations owe to Dayton Hartman. Dayton Hartman, "The Historic Case for the Trinity," in *Answering Islam: a Christian-Muslim dialog*, 1999, www.answering-islam.org/authors/hartman/trinity_historic.html, accessed April 15, 2014, pt. 1, sec. 2, subsec. 1.

[318] St. Augustine, *On the Trinity,* bk. 2, chap. 10. Kindle.

[319] It is striking that only one of the three men say that he will return to Sarah so that she will bear a child ("I will return . . . ."; v. 10). It is hard, from a canonical or systemtic perspective, not to think of the Holy Spirit's visitation to Mary, the mother of Jesus, so that Mary would conceive (it is obviously analogical). The two men of chapter 19 that go to Sodom tell lot (v. 13) that they are about to destroy the city and that these two men were sent by YHWH. By analogy, only the Son and Spirit are sent to humanity. Then, in v. 14, Lot reports that YHWH is about to destroy the city despite the fact that the men said they were going to destroy it (v. 13). How far this is taken as pertaining to the Trinity is hard to decide, but easier depending on the type of theology being used: difficult on biblical theology, easier on systematic and practical theology, and easiest in the constructive theology pursued here.

[320] Some might object that the later narrative of Genesis 19 identifies two of the three men as angels. Three cursory responses refuse to concede the claim that Genesis 18 insinuate that the three men are YHWH in some way. First the Hebrew *mal'āk* (angel; מַלְאָךְ) has equivocal meanings because it can stand for, and is used this way in Scripture (i.e., Gen. 32:1 – 7, where it is used twice of humans), just someone who is a messenger. It can also mean "angel" in the supernatural sense of those mysterious beings who are waiting and serving around God's throne and doing tasks God assigned them. Secondly, the angel of YHWH is conveyed as YHWH at places (i.e., Zech. 3). Thirdly, the author of Hebrews in the NT is overtly presenting a Christocentric angelology, meaning that the author of Hebrews plays on the equivocal meanings above by comparing Christ to the angels, but, as the proclamation to the entire book of Hebrews announces (vv. 1 – 3), He is the supreme messenger/angel of God (Heb. 1:1 – 14).

objected that no prominent contemporary Old Testament scholars would interpret the text of

Genesis 18 – 19 as has been done here. This is to be expected, though, since the biblical theology

task is not the canonical or systematic theological task. The tasks are different, but they provide

results that reciprocially inform each other.[321]

The discontinuity — despite all the Western Church owes St. Augustine — of the

formula, "the New Testament is concealed in the Old and the Old is revealed in the New," is a

bit too strong. To say that the New is altogether concealed in the Old dissembles the evidence of

Old Testament Scripture, resulting in a difficult concession to Islam.[322] Based on these limited

aforementioned observations, the New Testament is intimated in the Old and the Old Testament

is explicated in the New. Said in biblical fashion, the OT provides the seed (intimation), and the

New Testament unpacks the seed unto Christ (explication).[323] Rather than claiming that the New

Testament is concealed in the Old Testament, an appeal can be made to the Torah, held to be

Scripture by both Muslims and Christians, which Scripture already indicates some differentiation

of the one God.

Returning to Fairbairn's advice, these Old Testament observations support Fairbairn's

prescription to start thinking on threeness before oneness, or threeness in oneness. Threeness is

not to be considered in light of the "Say not Three" mentioned in the Qur'an (Surah 4:171). This

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[321] The point of all this is that the grammatical historical method of interpretation is only one step in the theological task. There remains canonical interpretation, intertextuality, retrospective interpretation, and *sensus plenoir*, among others.

[322] St. Augustine, *Quaestiones in Heptateuchum*, bk. 2, chap. 73; St. Augustine, *A Treatise on the Spirit and the Letter*, in Anti-Pelagian Writings, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2007, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf105.xi.i.html, accessed April 20, 2014, chap. 27.

[323] Paul's argument (Gal. 3:15 – 19) that seed be taken as singular and not as a collective noun, and, then, applied to Christ is a teaching already entailed in the Torah itself (cf. Gen. 15:3 – 5 and Num. 24 1 – 20, especially verse 17). Sailhamer has done phenomenal work in convincingly showing this. John H. Sailhamer, *The Meaning of the Pentateuch: Revelation, Composition, and Interpretation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), chap. 8. Kindle.

reference to "Three" is offset against the oneness of Allah immediately following: "Desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one Allah; far be It from His glory that He should have a son . . . ." (4:171). The threeness of which Fairbairn speaks is of the *Hypostaseis*, not the *ousia*. In other words, the Christian doctrine of Trinity agrees that "God is only one God," which it cogently expresses in terms of *ousia*. Christianity does deny, though, the Qur'an's assertion that the Deity should not have a Son.

To begin with threeness is to begin with the internal differentiation of the Triune God; threeness, however, does not impugn the oneness of *ousia*. The vague differentiation internal to God incrementally revealed across early history (in the canonical books of the Torah) conveys that this differentiation — which God reveals about Godself — is important for describing and understanding Who God is. The lynchpin text for all worship of YAHWEH, Deuteronomy 6:4, presents both a meager averseness against unitary monotheism and a piece of evidence for an internally differentiated monotheistic God. If understanding YAHWEH to be a unicity is constitutive of a so-called "pure-monotheism," why does YAHWEH muddy this purity by revealing Himself in terminology indicative of some plurality or differentiation?

Fairbairn's point is sound because human cognitive processes, when thinking about the Trinity (the epistemic staring point), are sequential. It is not for affirming what the Trinity is ontologically. In this regard, the Oneness and Threeness must always be held in proportionality, never with one emphasized more than the other. Is there a basis for thinking of YAHWEH in terms of diversity from the Torah? Hopefully, the aforementioned texts are evidence of this. The most important Old Testament text on this matter from the Torah — and perhaps the entire Old Testament — is Deuteronomy 6:4. It uses *'eḥad* instead of *yāḥîd*, which undergirds that thinking of God in terms of some differentiation in the Old Testament is not an imposition of New

Testament revelation upon the Old. Although a question of theological method, the theologian may then take another methodological step, or he may even start there: the Old Testament can be used for systematic theology, following the retrospective interpretive method Jesus commends in Luke 24:44.

The threeness of the Trinity, therefore, is expressed in the *Hypostaseis* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To speak of the *ousia* (oneness) of the Trinity necessarily leads to speaking of the threeness, and vice versa.[324] Each One of these *Hypostaseis* is in one *ousia* (*homoousia*) with the other Two, and thereby working, willing, and acting in perichoretic intra-relationships.[325] For each *Hypostasis* is indwelling the other Two, so They are *enhypostatically* one (*ousia*).[326] They exist perichoretically, that is, the *Hypostaseis* exist in mutually interpenetrating intra-relationships *ad extra*.[327] The extent of this interpenetration (*perichōrēsis*) is complete so that Their *ousia* is one and the same.

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[324] Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 29.2 and 31.14.

[325] St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 186 and 202; St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, bk. 1, chap. 12. Kindle; Volf, *Allah*, 130 – 131 and 137 – 138. St. John of Damascus' comments on the one nature and activity of God is one of the best summaries on the matter (202): "The abiding and resting of the Persons in one another is not in such a manner that they coalesce or become confused, but, rather, so that they adhere to one another, for they are without interval between them and inseperable and their mutual indwelling is without confusion. For the Son is in the Father and the Spirit, and the Spirit is in the Father and the Son, and the Father is in the Son and the Spirit, and there is no merging or blending or confusion. And there is one surge and one movement of the three Persons. It is impossible for this to be found in any created nature."

[326] The use of enhypostasis follows the terminology laid out in chapter two: that one hypostasis only exists in the other hypostaseis of the Trinity. With this said, St. John of Damascus identifies at least three different ways this term can be used; the denotation used here resides closest to the second he describes. St. John of Damascus, *The Philosophical Chapters*, chap. 44.

[327] I have outlined the development of *perichoresis* in Gregory Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor in my article. Brian Scalise, "Perichoresis in Gregory Nazianzen and Maximus the Confessor," *Eleutheria* 2 no. 1 (2012), 58 – 76. The following citations represent the data investigated in this article. Gregory Nazianzen, *Epistle CI*, sec. 4; *Oration* 18.42; *Oration* 30:6: there are two references in *perichōréō*, the verbal form of *perichōrēsis* here; *Oration* 31.14; Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones Ad Thalassium*; *Ambiguum* 2; *Ambiguum* 3; *Ambiguum* 4; *Ambiguum* 5; and *Second Letter to Thomas*. Maximus' works were not investigated exhaustively, but those listed were analyzed closely.

A consequence of taking each One as fully *enhypostatically* abiding in the other Two is that each One may be considered *autotheos*, God in Himself.[328] It is impossible to divide the *ousia*, but, because of the limitations of human cognition and language, the Father, or the Son, or the Spirit might be the object of the mind's attention.[329] The human mind's epistemic weakness may only have One in view, but to mentally attend to any One of Them is to attend to all Three: Philip asks Jesus to show him the Father with Jesus' response being, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip" (John 14:8 – 9)?[330] Each *Hypostasis* of the Trinity perichoretically and homoousially share divinity in common with the other Two because They are "one in *ousia*, Three in properties."[331] The dynamic reality of the one divine essence/*ousia* is fully the Father's, fully the Son's, and fully the Spirit's, thus the *Hyposteseis* are equal in every respect, one *Monarchia*, one Greatness, *ergo* one God.[332] St. John of Damascus precludes the

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[328] Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 29.2; 31.14; and 40.41.

[329] Hence, the importance of analogies, or *vestigia* (trace, imprint) in this world, are not to be scoffed at although every analogy for the Trinity only goes so far before it fails to represent the Trinity. St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, bk. 9, chap. 5. Kindle. Augustine's analogy of mind, knowledge, love is does well to represent much truth about the Trinity. Timothy of Baghdad, *Apology for Christianity*, pt. 1.Timothy of Baghdad offered a number of interesting analogies: the human body and an apple in terms of its wholeness, scent, and taste. He also uses the sun and light, but this one is quite common.

[330] St. John of Damascus, *The Orthodox Faith*, 186; Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration XL*, chap. XLI.

[331] Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 31.9. "What then, say they, is there lacking to the Spirit which prevents His being a Son, for if there were not something lacking He would be a Son? We assert that there is nothing lacking—for God has no deficiency. But the difference of manifestation, if I may so express myself, or rather of their mutual relations one to another, has caused the difference of their Names. For indeed it is not some deficiency in the Son which prevents His being Father (for Sonship is not a deficiency), and yet He is not Father. According to this line of argument there must be some deficiency in the Father, in respect of His not being Son. For the Father is not Son, and yet this is not due to either deficiency or subjection of Essence; but the very fact of being Unbegotten or Begotten, or Proceeding has given the name of Father to the First, of the Son to the Second, and of the Third, Him of Whom we are speaking, of the Holy Ghost that the distinction of the Three Persons may be preserved in the one nature and dignity of the Godhead. For neither is the Son Father, for the Father is One, but He is what the Father is; nor is the Spirit Son because He is of God, for the Only-begotten is One, but He is what the Son is. The Three are One in Godhead, and the One Three in properties . . . ."

[332] St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 186.

danger of thinking in composition, saying, "without any composition or blending such as is the coalescence of Sabellius."[333]

Perichōrēsis was developed to convey the reality of the three *Hypostaseis* residing within each Other, the Father in the Son, the Son in the Father, the Spirit in the Father, and the Spirit in the Son, while excluding notions of mixing or composing.[334] It is in this sense that saying each *Hypostasis* is *perichoretically* related is also to say that Each is *enhypostatically* in the Others *ad extra*, but without confusion or division although demanding distinctions of the *Hypostaseis*. *Perichōrēsis* serves the theological purpose of clarifying how the *Hypostaseis* are one rather than separate the *Hypostaseis* of the Triune God because it provides a kind of "conceptual bridge" for connecting the "how" or "mode of being" of the *Hypostaseis* intimately to the "what" of the *ousia*. The *homoousion* already implies distinctions since it means "same being," intimating the "same to whom" question noted earlier in the "Survey of the Literature" section.[335] The *Hypostaseis* are not only in relationships, but in intra-relationships, which, borrowing Torrance's term, may be called "divine-onto-reltationships."[336] Each *Hypostasis* of the Trinity is only who He is based on the divine-onto-relationships inherent to Him; and this coinherent unity is one

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[333] Ibid, 187.

[334] Scalise, "Perichoresis," 58 – 76. How this comes about in Gregory of Nazianzus and how his thought is advanced by Maximus the Confessor is the topic of this article.

[335] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 166. "Thus in their Communion in Love with one another they are three Persons, one Being. Their differences from each other as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, instead of separating them from one another involve a 'sort of ontological communication' between them, and as such are constitutive of their Unity in Trinity and their Trinity in Unity." Torrance cites Nikos Nissiotis. Nikos A. Nissiotis, *The Orthodox Ethos*, ed. A. Philippou (Oxford, 1964), 43.

[336] Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God*, 166. "Divine-onto-relationships" need to be distinctly differentiated from "human-onto-relationships." The differences include, although not limited to: (1) humans experience part of their distinction from one another as separation from one another, whereas the *Hypostaseis* do not experience Their distinctions by separation; (2) human cognitive oneness is achieved through distinct separation, whereas "divine cognitive oneness" owes both to the oneness of nature and the perichoretic intra-relations; and (3) divine relatedness is always utterly open between the *Hypostaseis*, whereas human relationships always entail limitation and weakness, wherein open communication is always finite and flawed.

because of the homoousial nature of the Father, Son, and Spirit.[337] It is adequate to say that

perichoresis presents God's oneness as "*koinōnia*" because the Father, Son, and Spirit are

inseparatably one and the same nature.[338] There is no exact representation of this in creation. To

say, also, that God's *ousia* is *koinōnia* is correct since God is His homoousially one "divine-

onto-relationships" among the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Whatever qualifies divinity is true

of all three *Hypostaseis*, that is, They are homoousial to One Another. To think otherwise is to

impose separation into God's *ousia* (His inherent nature), mutilating Him by depriving or

separating a *Hypostasis* from Him and, thereby, rupturing His *ousia* of a wholative-constitutive

Hypostasis — not a partative-composing *Hypostasis*.[339]

Miroslav Volf records al-Razi's objection to the Trinity based on the incarnation of the

Son only, not the other two *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity, resulting in more than one divine essence

needed. This objection would only work if the *perichoretic* mutually constituting *Hypostaseis* of

the Trinity could be divided, but They cannot. The One *ousia* of God is the intra-related

Hypostaseis. The Son is in the Father while incarnated (Jn. 10:38). Volf concludes, ". . . the three

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[337] This term is built from *ousia* and the prefix, in Greek, *homo*, which together denotes "same being." Used as an adjective, as I have done here, it centers the meaning of the nature of God (*ousia theou*), not as some lifeless substratum, but as a nature inherently relationaland lively. Conceptions of a "fourth thing" in the Trinity are altogether wrong since it introduces a fourth something into who/what God is.

[338] James Torrance, *Worship,* 21.

[339] St. Athanasius, *Against Arian*, bk. 1, chap. 9 and 29. ". . . the Son, not being a work, but proper to the Father's essence, always is; for, whereas the Father always is, so what is proper to his essence must always be; and this is his Word and his Wisdom. . . . For the offspring not to be ever with the Father is a disparagement of the perfection of his essence." St. John of Damascus, *On Heresies*, 156. Timothy of Baghdad, *Apology for Christianity*, pt. 1. ". . . so also if one separates from God His Word and His Spirit, He will cease to be a rational and living God, because the one who has no reason is called irrational, and the one who has no spirit is dead. If one, therefore, ventures to say about God taht there was a time in which He had no Word and no Spirit, such a one would blaspheme against God, because his saying would be equivalent to asserting that there was a time in which God had no reason and no life."

The term above, "wholative-constitutive" is designed to note that each of the *hypostaseis* of the Trinity occupy the same divine "space" *ad extra* (on a spatial analogy), so removing any One of the *hypostaseis* is the same as removing the entirety of the One God. To repeat, any One of the *hypostaseis* are only who They are by virtue of the other *hypostaseis* residing wholly and *perichoretically* in *Each*. Maximus the Confessor makes this point in a longer way. Maximus the Confessor, *Chapters on Knowledge*, Second Century, chap. 1.

"Persons" mutually indwell each other [and] . . . God's acts towards all that is outside God are undivided. . . . It is not that one divine "Person" inheres in Jesus, while the other two continue to remain together in "heaven." Rather, the one God, in the "Person" of the Word, becomes incarnate."[340]

Does the complexity of the Trinity's oneness argue on Islam's behalf since Allah's *Tawḥīd* appears easier to understand? The idea of Allah being One prior to creation seems simple, but, in reality, no one has ever experienced this idea of a lonely unicity. Once someone thinks he has "got it," he denounces that he "got it." Precisely because once someone engages a lonely omniscient unicity, that omniscient unicity is no longer lonely, but, instead, now in relationship to the person thinking. Everyone is born *in* relationships because human conception is an act of relationships (i.e., sex). Further, a human is his relationships.[341] Every human is in some respects biologically his parents, spiritually related to the Deity, and cognitively related to parents and others. To affirm the unipersonal nature of Allah — that *Tawḥīd* allows for neither external nor internal differentiation — is to affirm a mystery that no human has any concrete experience of at all. The reality humanity finds itself in is one patently colored by relationships at every turn. No human knows what it means to exist apart from relationships since it is impossible for a human not to be in relationships. Therefore, if Muslims claim that the oneness of Allah is easy to understand, such a claim would not resemble the actual difficulty of the doctrine.[342]

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[340] Volf, *Allah*, 137 – 138.

[341] This affirmation is to be seen in the light of the earlier comments in chapters one and two.

[342] Of course, the difficulty is exacerbated when thinking about Allah's existence in eternity past, but it is still a difficulty even when thought about in relation to creation. The entire idea of "one-and-another," as argued in the last chapter, is altogether creaturely according to Islam, and, so, applying this creaturely concept to Allah is an utter violation of Allah's *tanzīh*. Can Muslims affirm that Allah is One without imposing the creaturely idea of "one-

Does the doctrine of the Trinity's oneness have difficulties when thought with creation? Without creation, the *Hypostaseis* constitute the relationships perfectly and *perichoretically* that the one God is *homoousially*. This *ousia* (what) is one "in three *Hypostaseis*" (how), as Damascene affirmed earlier (chap. 2). Jesus describes His oneness to the Father in the neuter ἐν (*hen*; "one thing") rather than the masculine εἷς (*heis*; "one person"), delineating Their oneness in terms of "what" rather than "who" (John 10:30).[343] When thinking of God's oneness, it is God's *ousia* that is in view. God's *ousia* is never to be left unhinged from the distinctions of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, and the distinctions of the *Hypostaseis* should not be left unmoored from the *ousia*. The distinctions of the Father, Son, and Spirit, establishes a foundation for the notion of otherness and personal otherness.[344] This is not unimportant towards the question of God's oneness in view of creation. Since God is internally differentiated ("the how" of the *Hypostaseis*), external differentiation (in creating) does not seem strange, being only an analogical representation of the differentiation of the *Hypostaseis* by what is not God (i.e., creation).[345] The differentiation of creation is explained by the immanent differentiation that subsists among the *Hypostaseis* by the manner of Their personal distinctions. The unity and

and-another" onto Him? If not, Islam's doctrine of Allah, and His oneness, is readily more complex than *prima facie*.

[343] If "one" was masculine, then this Scripture would support some form of modalism by confusing the *Hypostaseis*, but "one" is neuter, leaving open the question of precisely "what" constitutes the Father's and Son's oneness. It is not being suggested that this text teaches that the Father and Son are in one nature (homoousial to One Another); rather, this text is part of the scriptural theme developed in the New Testament linking Jesus' identity to Yahweh's identity. This "link" led to the theological debates of the second and third century of the Common Era, culminating in the Nicene Creed (325 C.E.) with its later expansion to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 C.E.).

[344] Zizioulas, "Otherness and the Being of God," in *Communion & Otherness*. Zizioulas walks through the dangers of taking "substance" in the Greek philosophical sense as rightly predicated of God. The danger is introducing a fourth principle in God, rather than just the three. Zizioulas also is uncomfortable with "substance" in this way because a substance can will nothing. Only persons can will anything to be or to occur. Thus, Zizioulas maintains that the divinity must be seen to freely and causally flow from the Monarchia of the Father.

[345] Two of the best discussions of the relationship between contingent reality and God in recent years has come from the mind of Torrance and Hart. Thomas Torrance, "God and the Contingent Universe," in *Divine and Contingent Order* (Edinburgh: Oxford University Press, 1981). Hart, "Creation," in *The Beauty of the Infinite*.

unities found in creation are explicated by the *homoousia* of the one God. If irreducibly

complexity is an accurate description of creation's inherent structural realities, then these unities

are of differentiated type, not the undifferentiated type.[346] Thus, the two essential variables for

the equation of contingent creation are established (i.e., unity and diversity) in the nature of God

theTrinity.

Contingent reality is not fully dissimilar from the Trinity, but, rather, the creation is the

Trinity's analogical correlate in its unity and differentiation.[347] Contingent reality does not

invade or question God's oneness, but creation is its analogical expression.[348] God's *ousia* is

explained farther by the *homoousion*, which entails God's internally differentiation manner of

existing presented by the homoousial *Hypostaseis*. God's *ousia* is expounded by the "same-

nature-intra-relationships" that He is. Since the Father knows the Son, and the Son the Spirit, and

the Spirit the Father, there is eternally "other known" and "being known." The blueprint, then,

for what "otherness" involves is intimately present in God's loving *koinōnia*. This blueprint only

needs represented, analogically, by those things that are not God, i.e., creations: "And ^{E}*lōhîm*

[pl.] said [sg.], "Let Us make humanity in Our [pl.] image [sg.], *like* Our [pl.] similitude [sg.]"

(Gen. 1:26; trans., grammatical brackets, and italics mine). Here is the mysterious call of God to

that which is not, and to what is not God. All creation, and any particular being, is always

groundless in itself, having been called from nothingness (i.e., no-thing-ness; not the confused

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[346] Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell* (Harper's Collins, 2009). Kindle.

[347] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Mark Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 134 and 140. Balthasar cooridinates the external reality of the visible church with its invisible coherent unity as the mystical Body of Christ, humanity united in terms of Gregory's theosis or divinization.

[348] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 16 – 18.

"nothing" that, thought to be something underlying being, becomes "something").[349] Each

Hypostasis lives by virtue of the relationships that each One is involved in homoousially and

perichoretically. Thus, the *ousia* of God includes His koinoniac dynamism, which is constituted

by the *perichoretic* same-nature-intra-relationships. This dynamic *ousia* (divine Others in onto-

relations) is analogically represented by humans as real contingent others who can become

related to God.[350] Since creation is analogically similar to the Trinity in its unity in diversity,

Christianity is not committed to weigh the dissimilarity of the Deity nearly as much as Islam.

The distinctions/otherness of the *Hypostaseis* are expressed analogically by creating distinct

others, namely, creatures.

With these heavy laden comments on oneness completed, the next sections narrow in on

the matters of distinctness and relatedness. Along the way, just as in chapter three, the doctrine

of the Trinity will have to account for how it can ground the personhood of human persons.

Then, a minor excursus and summary will lay out the Trinity's relationship to creation in view of

the three categories of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness.

Distinctness

Hypostasis is almost a shorthand way of saying "that which marks distinction in the

Trinity." To speak biblically of these distinct *Hypostaseis* in relationships is to speak of the

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[349] Maximus the Confessor, "Chapters on Knowledge," in *Maximus the Confessor: Selected Writings*, trans. and notes George C. Berthold, THE CLASSICS OF WESTERN SPIRITUALITY: A LIBRARY OF GREAT SPIRITUAL MASTERS, ed. John Farina (New York: Paulist Press, 1985), chap. 6.

This appears to be a syntactic-semantic conclusion based on the verb *br'*, taking God as its only subject across the OT in the creating it indicates (Gen. 1:1).

[350] The analogy is that of coming to know and love God's *ousia* by God's revelation conjoined with humanity's experience and acceptance of that revelation. This is analogical because humanity experiences God's *ousia* always at a distance whereas the *hypostaseis* know and love perfectly, in perfect perspicuity, and in full immediate access because They are the one *ousia*.

causal relations among the *Hypostaseis* (John 15:26; John 1:18).[351] On the relational taxonomy

presented here, Vanhoozer's covenantal relations are a helpful supplement.[352] This is no denial

of the causal relations, and their impact on Trinitarian thinking down through the ages. When

discussing these causal relations, there must be caution against a certain "metaphysicalism" or

"staticalizing." The Scriptures' narratives situate μονογενης (John 1:18; *monogenēs*: "only

begotten God/Son") and ὃ . . . ἐκπορευεται (John 15:26; *hò ekporeutai*: Spirit "who proceeds"

from the Father) in contexts of lively love, purpose, and joy (John 1, 15:26, 16:12 – 15; Matt.

3:13 – 17). Simply, these terms are personal; John even breaks grammar rules in order to convey

the personal character of the Spirit by using the masculine demonstrative pronoun ἐκεινος

(*ekeinos*: "that person"), instead of the neuter ἐκεινο (*ekeino*: "that thing"), to describe Him in

John 15:26.[353] These terms, Father, only-begotten Son/God, and the proceeding Spirit, envisage

activity, love, favor, and joy more than inert notions of causes, substratum, or immobile ideas of

layers. It is better — and certainly paying far more tribute to the lively life of God presented in

the Scripture — to use a woman pregnant in the womb to talk of the Trinity than depersonalized

ideas.[354] Perhaps someone could even dare to speak of sex along with the entire procreational

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[351] It is observable from early church history (Origin) to the Trinitarian expert, St. John of Damascus. St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 182; Origin, *On First Principles*, 1.2.2. Origin is careful to note just how personal the Son, God's Wisdom, is.

[352] Vanhoozer is not the first to notice the personal character needed to talk of God the Trinity. Sergius Bulgakov, *The Wisdom of God: A Brief Summary of Sophiology* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1937), 24 – 25; Michael Aksionov Meerson, *The Trinity of Love in Modern Russian Theology: The Love Paradigm and the Retrieval of Western Medieval Love Mysticism in Modern Russian Trinitarian Thought (from Solovyov to Bulgakov)* (Quincy Il: Franciscan Press, 1998), 1 – 26; Vanhoozer, "Does the Trinity Belong to a Theology of Religion? On Angling in the Rubicon and the "Identity" of God," in *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 67. He says, "The gospel narratives that identify God as Father, Son, and Spirit call for and configure an ontological reflection that recognizes the triune life as constituted by covenantal, not causal, relations—relations that help us to understand who God is and what love is."

[353] *Pneuma* ("Spirit") is neuter, and therefore, by following proper grammar rules, should be represented by a neuter demonstrative pronoun.

[354] Fairbairn, *Life in the Trinity*, chap. 3, sec. 3. ". . . notice again how interconnected the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, Christians, love and obedience are. The very fabric of who we are is an intricate tapestry of relationships and actions."

pleasure as better analogies than the doldrums of depersonalized metaphysical speech. Of course, using the analogy God has chosen for Himself is far too risky; it is better to build a wall around God in the stolidity of onto-theological discourse.[355] Earlier (chap. 2), attention was paid to Genesis 1:26 – 28 and 2:24. *'ādām* in 1:26 is best translated as "humanity" since verse 27 clarifies that *'ādām* refers to both male and female (they together are the image of God). Then after God blesses them, He commands them to have sex to fill the earth ("Be fruitful and multiply"). It is the very first thing God commands of humanity in Genesis 1. The causal notions of the Father, begotten, and proceeding have prominence of place in any presentation of the Trinity, but ever linked to the personal analogies humans offer in their various creative endeavors, especially the analogy of procreation, if, at least, we are to listen/obey strictly to God's self-chosen analogy in Genesis 1:26 – 28 and 2:24.

The term Father has been used in four ways in both Scripture and in theological constructions, although only two of them are of current concern. It refers both to the one LORD God as the Father of all things,[356] but antecedently it refers to the *Hypostasis* of the Father.[357] In this latter sense, Father is a relative term, always demanding a Son.[358] Further, God is Spirit.[359] Thus the *Hypostasis* of the Father takes no superiority over the Son and the Spirit because, for

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[355] There is the larger question of whether onto-theology should be performed at all. The metaphysical "peering into" God's nature so as to conclude that "God is a cause in Himself" seems to hoist a creaturely (or ontic) framework of cause and effect onto God. With Jesus, echoed by Karl Barth in the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics*, all could say, "God is," despite even this deficiency of language. Jesus quotes Exodus 3:6 in Matthew 22:32, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Issac, and the God of Jacob." Here, again, the first, person singular "I" is joined to the plural *Ēlōhîm* in the Hebrew of Exodus 3:6.

[356] Exod. 4:22; Isa. 1:2, 63:16, 64:8; Jer. 31:9, 3:19, 3:4; Hos. 11:1; Deut. 8:5, 32:6; Mal. 1:6; Ps 103:13; Job 38:25 – 30; Act 17:28.

[357] Matt. 7:21, 10:20, 10:33; John 8:49, 17:5. Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: an Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 23.

[358] Ibid. 26; Fred Sanders, *The Deep Things of God: how the Trinity Changes Everything* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 79.

[359] St. Augustine, *On the Trinity*, bk. 7, chap. 3, sec. 6; John 4:24.

the Father to be Father, He is homoousially constituted with the Son and Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10 –

12). Nevertheless, the one LORD God is always orderly, the *taxis* of the Trinity forever being

Father, Son, and Spirit, concretized in Scriptural economic revelation.[360] This *taxis* refers to

position, not rank, to disposition, not class, and to relational unity, not to hierarchical disunity.[361]

The definition of "Father" as the one God of all creation is also a relative term, because

creation must exist for God to become the Father of it. This denotation for Father is a synonym

for Creator. The idea that the Deity might become Someone different than He was before

creation was a difficulty for Islam's view of Allah. Does that same problem occur here? The

doctrine of God the Trinity presents the *Hypostasis* of the Father as eternal and, therefore, a

Father antecedent to creation. The one God as Father to creation is an expression of this former

eternal role — and as will be shown below, the act of "creating" includes all the *Hypostaseis*.

This giving life to creation, of course, is done analogically since God the Father of the Son does

not give life to creation in the same way that He gives life to the Son (John 5:26). Concerning the

latter, Origen rightly observed that "Wisdom was generated before any beginning that can be

either comprehended or expressed."[362] Origen is referring to the divine *Logos* when He speaks of

Wisdom in this context, and, just before in the same chapter, Origen says that the Son is born

"without any beginning."[363] A father is a life giver. This statement holds true when thinking of

God the Father of the Son, God the Father of creation, and for every human father and their

offspring. As the Father is a Father to the Son by timeless generation (ἀχρόνος) internal to the

immanent Trinity so also is He the Father of creation external to the immanent Trinity, not by

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[360] The most common formula is "from the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit." This order is not always precisely this way as in 2 Cor. 13:14.

[361] Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 383 and fn. 60 in chap. 17; Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, 3.4.

[362] Origin, *First Principles*, 1.2.2; St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 182.

[363] Origin, *First Principles*, Ibid.

timeless generation, but by spatio-temporally creating contingent creatures.[364] It follows that if

He is the Father of creation, likewise are the other *Hypostaseis* since the Three in Their ever

living *koinōnia* constitute the one God and Father of all creation. The point of all this is that God

does not find Himself becoming a Father, but, instead, is a Father both before creating and after

(Eph. 3:14 – 15).

These distinctions of the *Hypostaseis* in the Trinity do not violate their oneness in either

ousia or working.[365] Enough space has been devoted to the oneness of *ousia*, so a word on Their

working will supplement. Any suppositions that there are three consciousnesses *independent* of

One Another in the Trinity are dissimilar Scripture because whatever the Father does, the Son

does likewise, and whatever the Father gives, the Son gives, and the Holy Spirit gives (John

16:14 – 15).[366] The best analogy for understanding the one activity and "intra-related

consciousness" is the harmony of music, or the elaborations of Scripture itself.[367] God is a poet,

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[364] Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity*, 21, 27 and 34; Sanders, *The Deep Things of God*, 91 – 92; "A Father may create a statue or a house out of something besides himself, but a Son comes from his very being. He is not a lower order of being but is on the same level as the Father. Second, the Son stands in that relationship of originating from the Father—he comes from the Father. The classic word for that relation of origin is begetting, so we say that the Father begets the Son." St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, 178 – 180. "He begets without time and without beginning, unaffectedly, unchangingly, and without copulation. Neither does His unfathomable begetting have beginning or end. It is without beginning, because He is immutable; it is unchanging, because He is unaffected and incorporeal; it is without copulation, also because He is incorporeal and because He is the only one God and without need of any other; it is unending and unceasing, because He is without time and without end and ever the same--for that which is without beginning is without end, although that which is without end by a gift of grace is by no means without beginning, as is the case with the angels."

[365] Maximus the Confessor, *Commentary on the Our Father*, chap. 4. "Working" above signifies all that is performed by the Trinity.

[366] Horrell takes a pro-stance towards three individual centers of consciousness. J. Scott Horrell, "Chapter 2: The Eternal Son of God in Social Trinity," in *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, eds. and contributors Fred Sanders and Klaus Issler (Nashville: B&H Publishing Company, 2007), chap. 2, pt. 3, sec. 7. "The *social model* of the Trinity designates that the one divine Being eternally exists as three distinct centers of consciousness." Kindle. Hart disagrees. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 171. "Without question, Christian thought must not conceive of the Trinity as a federation of three individual centers of consciousness . . . ."

[367] Hart, "ii. Divine Counterpoint," in *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 282 ff. Hart explains the creation's analogical expression of the divine infinite by means of the analogy of Bach's music. Brian Scalise, "Apocalyptic Beauty," *Eleutheria* 2, no. 2 (2013), 49 – 64. Some of the major themes of Scripture are traced across to the

taking themes in the Old Testament (intimations; e.g., Gen.3:15: seed, *protoevangelion*) and elaborating them in restatements and creative presentations later (explication; e.g., Christ) of earlier content. The Hebrew poetry of the Old Testament also provides large scores of synthetic parallelism, where one line is restated with further explanation. The goal is to refuse to understand the Father's statements as exactly repeated in the exact same ways by the Son (and the Spirit). There is no way to make sense of the I/Thou discourses between the Father and the Son in the Gospels if this is done (e.g., John 12:28). If the *Hypostaseis* are presented as three centers of consciousness, then the homoousial and perichoretic intra-relational communication of these "centers of consciousness" need to be stressed.

One possible interpretation of Jesus' baptism, aiming to stress "oneness-in-threeness" communication, is that the Father's voice from heaven points out the Father's Word (Christ is even that Word then) and the Father's delight (well-pleased). The Son is that Word elaborated in humanity even as Jesus sanctifies Himself in baptism. The Spirit glorifies the Son by creatively illuminating Him as the One the Father glorifies in the Father's pleasure in the Son. All this is one expression, though, inasmuch as God's pleasure is packaged together with holiness/sanctity and glory/illumination. Another interesting point is that baptism itself is a sign of coming into union with the Trinity, either by the Gospels' imagery (but especially Luke-Acts; Acts 1:5; Luke 3:16) of Christ baptizing someone into the Spirit or the Pauline imagery of the Spirit baptizing someone into Christ (Romans 6: 1 – 4; 1 Cor. 12:12 – 13).

Apocalypse (Revelation), noting their elaborations. Then, the artwork of the Christian catacombs is analyzed to note or record any similar thematic elaborations or favorite themes from Scripture. Karl Barth uses "aesthetically" to convey the subjective side of experiencing the beautiful in terms of the emotions of joy, gladness, pleasure, and delight. Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. I/II (Peabody: Hedrickson, 2010), 652 – 654. Beale and McDonough point out the donation (intimation) and later elaboration (explication) by the imagery of the Temple in Ezekiel becoming a garden city in the Apocalypse (Book of Revelation). G. K. Beale and Sean McDonough, "Revelation," in Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament, eds. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic and Apollos, 2007), 1085.

What is needed is a *tertium quid* between appropriating someone else's speech/thought and isolated formulation of one's own speech/thought. On the human analogy, each person knows that the thoughts of her mind (consciousness) are a confluence of her own thoughts together with the appropriated thoughts of others. Child development towards speech is a fine example. A child's hearing and appropriating those phonetic speech/thoughts is united with some measure of creativity of his own. Another helpful analogy is beauty because it is a union of content with form (on a classical-objective model of beauty).[368] Although the activity of thought of the Trinity is one, this requires identity of content, not homogeneity of expression. The oneness of thought in the Trinity takes as part of its formation those distinctives proper (i.e., properties) to the *Hypostaseis*, however the "movement occurs" — from Father, by the Son, in the Spirit or a harmonic symphony in Their choral thunderings. An example of this might be God's thought to save humanity by giving of Himself. The Father gives by giving up His Son to death, and the Son gives by giving Himself and, positively, taking on humanity so as to articulate the giving the Father does (the divine cannot suffer and die). The Spirit gives by guiding the Son on earth in the Son's purpose of giving Himself, that purpose likewise the Father shares, and the Spirit gives of Himself by indwelling and, so, linking humanity to God's relationships in himself in God's *koinōnia* of joy, gladness, and love. All of this, linked intimately to the *homoousia*, is one thought, motion, and activity of the one God giving of Himself variously stylized (content expressed in different forms) by the *Hypostaseis*. The "taking up," i.e. appropriating, of another's thought does not demand homogeneity but just referential identity.[369] Variously expressing the thought-content does not suppose deficiency of the initial thought, but, in the fellowship of the

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[368] Bruno Forte, *The Portal of Beauty: Towards a Theology of Aesthetics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), vii; Farley, "The 'Great Theory of Beauty'," in *Faith and Beauty,* 17 ff.

[369] Nicholas Wolterstorff, "The Many Modes of Discourse," in *Divine Discourse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995). Although only one section is cited, the entirety of the book bears on the topic.

Trinity, there is already laid out the gratuitous play of variation, creatively expressed in the "styles" proper to each *Hypostasis*. After all, my thought is always distinctly mine, but never without influence from others. Every person who has ever written a research paper, cited someone else, quoted a movie, retold a joke, sang along with a song, or reenacted some event knows that his or her thought is richly communal, that is, human cognitive oneness occurs. According to the Trinitarian ethos, the isolated psyche is a myth, a mythos denying the intrinsic reality of the world endowed with relationships.

Artistry, then, is a better cognitive metaphor for dealing with God the Trinity than metaphysics or rote depersonalized analogies.[370] God's self-chosen analogy of humanity in unity (Gen. 1:26 – 28, 2:24), especially in the aspect of procreation, highlights the artistic dimension of humanity. Creativity, procreativity, and play are all connoted in artistic expression and sexual activity (within marriage). Similarly, Jesus notes the importance of children, those who make up the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:2 – 3). What is childlike? It is hard to bring what a child is like to mind without ushering in the attendant realities of laughter, playfulness, and creativity: in a word, gratuity. Both the image of humanity in Genesis and the image of a child in the Gospels are analogies for what God is like. God is identified by his gratuity in the sense that He never has needs (He is the prodigal God; Luke 15:11 – 32): the perichoretic intra-relationships among the *Hypostaseis* are similarly qualified by this unending playful (without a need) *koinōnia*. By analogy, humans experience human cognitive oneness, experienced by all in the days of their childhood. In sex and in the offspring so produced, there is a biological oneness in humanity. A child is the best example of being of the same substance of the parents although distinct as well: Trinitarian indeed. These are all analogies, but God's chosen analogies. In view of this

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[370] Cognitive metaphors are systemic metaphors that host an entire framework for understanding something else.

discussion, God's chosen analogy of humanity in relationships precludes the worn out baggage of *isolated* consciousness while retaining distinctness (with separateness) of human persons within the broader reality of relationships, in love, in sex, in human cognitive union, in play, and in worship of the one God, Father, Son, and Spirit, Three in One.

Relatedness

By means of recapitulation, the former discussions laid out the following on the relationships in the Trinity. God is internally differentiated, and, as a consequence, God is never lonely. Humans may be limited in their epistemic abilities, but if the human mind attends to One of the *Hypostasis*, it necessarily attends to all Three since They are homoousially united in Their perichoretic "divine-onto-relationships." God chose humanity in relationships (male and female; uniting in one flesh) as His analogy, His image bearer(s). Similarly, the important Hebrew term *'eḥad* ("one" in Genesis 2:24) is used to describe YHWH in Deuteronomy 6:4, which suggests some internal differentiation or diversity. Considerable amount of space was spent on the "working" of all three *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity. Whatever is done by Them, it is done homoousially and perichoretically together, hand-in-hand. This working together is not strange in view of Their having Their *ousia* together. They are One God and so cannot be divided, in acts or *ousia*. *Perichōrēsis* prescribes the intra-related, interpenetrated, unconfused, wholly coinherent, unmixed, and lively dynamism of the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity. This term speaks to *ousia* and the relationships that the *homoousia* is (onto-relations). Each *Hypostasis* of the Trinity is so enhypostactically (*ad extra*) related that a removal (if possible) of One *Hypostasis* would be a removal of a wholative-constitutive *Hypostasis*. In other words, God would cease to be.

Except for the distinctions (properties), each *Hypostasis* has proper to Himself all things are shared in common. These properties differentiate in terms of each *Hypostasis'* manner of

existing in the relations God is. Thus, there is no difference whatsoever in the *ousia* each

Hypostasis of the Trinity are. As conveyed in the economic revelation deposited in Scripture,

there is genuine recognition and response among the *Hypostaseis*. There is some measure of

I/Thou-ness. Thus the *koinōnia* that God is among the *Hypostaseis* includes "other known" and

"being known." Reciprocity obtains, explained to some degree by their stylized form of

communication. Although the *Hypostasis* of the Father is viewed as the *fons divitatas*, and the

Planner of creation, redemption, and eternity, the Son is not in slavish obedience. The Spirit is

not either by extension; neither the Son nor the Spirit can be since the *monarchia* of God is true

of all three *Hypostaseis*. Jesus is free to lay down His life and take it up (John 10:17 – 18). The

Father's love is evidenced by this "charge" He gave the Son. There is a unity here between

obedience and freedom.[371] This makes sense in view of the covenantal intra-relationships God is.

Love is demonstrable in the Trinity by way of trusting, fulfilling, obeying, allowing for

freedom, recognizing, rejoicing, delighting, knowing and being known, and orderliness. The

Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of Truth. All three of these characteristics are shared by the Father

and the Son: They are Both holy, Both Spirit, and Both the Truth. The Spirit's personal nature

must be emphasized because He does not only act as a sort of hub in Whom the Son and Father

meet, but He engages in the delight of the Father, the recognition and being recognized by the

Son, and creative elaboration of the life of the Son (i.e., four Gospels emphasizing different

themes), who is the perfect Image of the Father. All this is observable in the baptism of Jesus.

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[371] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 9. In his introduction, Zizioulas gives some anthropological consequences to his Trinitarian theology. One of them is "Personhood is freedom. In its anthropological significance, as well as in its theological significance, personhood is inconceivable without freedom; it is the freedom of being other. I hestitate to say 'different; instead of 'other', because 'different' can be understood in the sense of qualities (clever, beautiful, holy, etc.), which is not what the person is about. It is noteworthy that in God all such qualities are common to all three persons. Person implies not simply the freedom to have different qualities, but mainly the freedom simply to be youself. This means that a person is not subject to norms and stereotypes; a person cannot be classified in any way; a person's uniqueness is absolute. This finally means that only a person is free in the true sense.

The Spirit is part of the advocacy team that the Son and Him make, for They are Both sent, Both Illuminators, and Both the joy of God (Romans 14:17). This list and these comments could no doubt be extended, but that would be a digression. This is sufficient to show the true personal nature and true relatedness the Spirit is in with the Father and the Son. Echoing back to the Augustinian formula appropriated by some Muslims, the love of God the Trinity consists in Lover (Father), Beloved (Son), and Love (Spirit). Thus love based on the Trinity is not a vortex of self, self, and self. Instead, it is a picture of love defined by being for the other, in the other, and with the other. Love here is profoundly relational and makes others necessary for love to occur at all.

Humans on this paradigm are designed to be interrelatedly together (not intra-relatedly like the Trinity); this is integral to humans being personalized. God the Trinity shows that the antecedent reality that constitutes "a human person" is one of love: for the other, in the other (cognitive or sexual, as appropriately applied), and with the other. God the Trinity is always faithful to His Word and Spirit, both in keeping to His Word and remaining consistent in His Spirit, both in the divine-onto-relations the Father has to the Son and in the divine-onto-relation the Father has to the Spirit. Similarly, the Word is an articulation of the Spirit (which is the Spirit of the Father and Son) and the Spirit the intimate logic of that Word — the Spirit probes the very depths of God (1 Cor. 2:10). What does it mean for a human to be personalized in view of this theology of anthropology? Human community, or *koinōnia*, is always necessary for personalization. One's mind must express one's word and remain true to what one speaks (Vanhoozer's *ipse*-identity formation). In so doing, one's spirit is either formed into being characterized by covenant-keeping (staying true) or covenant-breaking. The contours of love are spelled out well by the above phrases: for the other, in the other, and with the other. A human in

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relationship must be for the good (as designed by God) of the other: care, concern, moral excellence, and enduring faithfulness. He must be intimately united as well (in the other), either by human cognitive union or, in marriage, sexual union or, in begetting, biological union. There is nothing quite so satisfying than being known so well that a friend or spouse might know what will be said, thought, or acted on next (fruit of human cognitive union). Lastly, to love like the Trinity is to be share life communally, but this community among humans is interrelational rather than intra-relational. This is expressed solidly in steadfastness and faithfulness. Christians especially are to abide together as this is connected to abiding in God (1 John 3:23 – 24). To mimic God's love in God the Trinity so as to be personalized is to be in community, unity in and despite distinctions, cognitive/sexual/biological harmony, refusing full homogenizing, and to refuse isolation. That is, humans are to be in an oneness together (like the Trinity), distinct within that unity (like the Trinity), and harmoniously related, just as God the Trinity.

Conclusion

This wide-ranging discussion through Trinitarian dogma is admittedly quick. Investigating the Trinity by the three categories of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness demanded certain theological terminology to qualify these. The discussion above was especially fluid because of the striking entailments the Trinity expresses: to speak of oneness brings with it distinctness and relatedness, and to speak of distinctness, oneness and relatedness, of relatedness, distinctness and oneness. There are high points that are worthy of repeating before moving into the comparative conclusion of this dissertation.

The Trinity refuses to be qualified by any formulation of the one or the many. Internal differentiation is offered instead as the answer the Trinity gives to the most basis quality of existence. This internal differentiation consists of three *hypostaseis*. They are not to be viewed as

compounded or blended; rather, They are one simple essence in three perfect (wholative) *hypostaseis*.

Human limitations make formulating and discussing the Trinity difficult because the cognitive abilities always must have a starting point. Thinking on the matter begins either with focus on threeness or oneness. This concession, albeit necessary in view of human finitude, does not repudiate the ontological status of the Trinity as proportionately a one-in-three in and a three-in-one.

The Torah, which is shared by Islam and Christianity as Scripture, intimates diversity in unity. Genesis 18 was especially important since its intimation was stronger than the other evidences in the Torah. The Gospels do not only intimate internal differentiation of the one God, but narrates how Jesus is God but can converse with the Father all the same. A theoretical interpretation of Jesus' baptism was offered as a potential articulation of this truth. Appropriated speech with the same referential identity in various stylizations is possible, even in the human realm, so how much more so with the perfect direct communication shared among the *hypostaseis* in the one *ousia* that They are.

The one *ousia* of God is His onto-relationships as Torrance has said so well in recent years. *Perichoresis* serves the distinctions well by highlighting difference while indicating perfect coinherence — i.e., *enhypostactically ad extra* — thereby supporting utter unity. There is no perfect analogy for this in creation; *ergo*, God the Trinity has a *mysterium* that goes beyond creaturely reality, but not without considerable analogies. St. Augustine's analogy of mind/thought/love can be complemented by the analogies of word/thought/love and

beauty/form/matter. To repeat, these are only analogical expressions, not identical

representations (but the Son of God is).

The Deity as Trinity will be compared with the Deity as Allah to see which doctrine

better accounts for the Deity's chosen analogy of humans in relationships (Gen. 1:26 – 28; 2:24).

After this paratactic comparison, some consequences will be outlined. These are both in terms of

practical and theoretical ramifications.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Introduction

A paratactic comparison concludes this dissertation. First, a short section in this introduction readdresses the issue of Islam's affirmation that humans are not made in the image of the Deity, thus questioning the criteria and abductive argumentation used throughout this work. Next, each salient point derived from chapters three and four on oneness, distinctness, and relatedness are compared, considered both without creation (or before the Deity created) and with creation (after the Deity created). Following this, there is a chart that simplifies all of this data into an easily accessible form. Then, a return to the thesis of this project is revisited in view of the foregoing analyses to demonstrate the Trinity's eminence over *Tawḥīdic* Allah in both explanatory depth and scope. Lastly and in closing, some foreseeable consequences from this investigation and promising trajectories are outlined.

Humanity is not completely dissimilar to Allah according to Islam

A segment of thought in Islam is that man is nothing like Allah. This is in opposition to Genesis 1:26 – 28 and 2:24, understood in the Christian tradition as humanity being in God's image, His supreme analogy. Before looking at why it seems that Allah is like humans, it is notable that this comparison would be legitimate even if this Muslim position could be convincingly defended: that man is nothing like Allah. The Trinity would still be a far more explanatory thesis towards explaining human relational reality than "dissimilar" *Tawḥīdic* Allah. Perhaps some Muslims will say, "Of course that is so; humanity is absolutely dissimilar to Allah since Allah's thirteen essential attributes include the attribute of dissimilarity." Muslim denial of the similarity between Allah and man would affirm that Allah does not explain human reality

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and relating; *ergo*, the explanation of the Trinity would be leaps and bounds beyond Islam in its explanatory depth. The Muslim allegation that Islam does not teach that Allah is similar to humanity, though, seems to give them an easy escape and weakens the potency of this critique of Islam. Therefore, a brief review of some points from chapter two revisits why the Muslim denial of the similarity between Allah and humanity is unconvincing.

The Qur'an uses creaturely analogies to describe Allah, likening Him to creation and personal relationshiops of humans. One-and-another relationships arrive according to Islam by the act of creation. Muslims can relate to Allah, which, in turn, means that Allah shares in that relationship. Thus, as part of analogical predication (cf. chap. 2), there is some univocal meaning of "human relating" that is common to and therefore rightly predicated of Allah as well. This makes Him like humans in His relating even if the disparate elements in analogical predication vastly outweigh the univocal elements. More significant is communication. Specifically, communicative-speech is a human experience. This idea precedes humanity's creation in Islam because the Qur'an, Allah's Speech, is eternal. The notion of Allah and His Speech being a means of communication is an eternal reality, and humans find themselves in the same situation in regard to using speech to communicate. Therefore, the human reality of speech and relating to others via speech makes Allah and humanity more than "totally dissimilar." The "ninety-nine beautiful names" (many of them at the least) demand human realities to give a basis by which to understand those names applied to Allah — analogically of course. If these "ninety-nine beautiful names" require human reality and relationships to make them conceivable of Allah, how does this enforce Allah's complete disparity from humanity? It does not, but, rather, reinforces the sameness (univocity) between Allah and humanity. To object that the "ninety-nine beautiful names" do not teach anything about who Allah is (or what His essence involves) is

ta'tîl, divesting Allah of His attributes. It would further pit someone against Al-Ghazālī's position, who *a fortiori* did allow for analogical interpretation. Claiming Allah to be "utterly other" is near to if not full agnosticism. Lastly, "other" is a term and concept derived from creation. To use it in the phrase "utterly other" is to predicate something of Allah that is creaturely, namely, "otherness" (cf. chap. 3, semantic issues). It is to be recalled at this point that the nature of Allah provides no grounding for "otherness."

Affirming a transcendence of Allah that makes Him utterly beyond violates *Tawḥīd* because Muslims are vehement in their affirmation that Allah is One, indicating the unipersonal nature of Allah and His simplicity. To affirm *Tawḥīd,* Muslims must apparently use the creaturely concrete "single thing," abstract from that the imagined idea of unrelated, undifferentiated, and lone unicity, and then predicate that of Allah (per Al-Ghazālī's method in chap. 2). Unless Allah is to become a transcendental One wholly devoid of any representation in human reality, this analogical imaginative idea of a lone unicity must be allowed. Perhaps just thinking of a singular person would be an allowed analogy as well, but if so, then humans are again like Allah to some degree, however marginal. If it is affirmed that neither of these analogies are allowed, what is left is an impenetrable transcendence, that is, agnosticism. To say that Allah is One (*Tawḥīd*), when there is no way to concretely conceptualize this, evacuates this saying of meaning (cf. chap. 3, conclusion). Already intimated above, the Qur'an cannot be considered a book of only guidance without betraying the contents of the Qur'an, like Surah 112, which indicate things or characteristics of who/what Allah is.

The Qur'an is a book of address, speaking to potential creations that would exist after Allah created. This suggests that the Qur'an is a true "other" to the extent that it is dissimilar from Allah by addressing and describing creatures in a conversation only possible after Allah

creates. This, of course, is not according to the majority Islamic view since Allah and His Speech are not to be understood binitarianly. The Speech (Qur'an) and Allah form a relationship that is understandable only in view of the human realities of internal dialogue or relating in a context of someone else's speech and oneself. Each person often speaks in such a way to disclose something of themselves and to direct others' thoughts just like the Qur'an discloses something of Allah and directs humanity. Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymīyya, and Ibn 'Arabī's tendency to see all reality as illusory or somehow one is understandable — more or less depending on which of these persons is in view.[372] If all reality is illusory or somehow monistically (emanation) one, then many of these critiques are avoided since all would just be Allah. Taking this stance is a fundamental refusal of realism and of the doctrine of contingent reality — which is a major trend following Ibn Taymīyya's affirmation even if he, in other places, speaks in emanationist terms. A final tangent concern before moving into the bulk of this chapter involves the nature of the Qur'an in view of Allah. If the Qur'an is not fully representative of Allah, then how is it retractable to Allah's essence as *Tawḥīd* demands? If the Qur'an is considered actually other, then how does not *shirk* occur, the Qur'an being associated with Allah as something separate from Him and dissimilar from Him in some measure?

<div align="center">Paratactic Comparison</div>

Oneness

Without creation, oneness in Islam conveyed by *Tawḥīd* means uniqueness and simplicity, conveying that Allah is unipersonal with no internal differentiation. In Christianity, oneness is conveyed by God's *ousia*, which involves the "manner of existing" of the three *Hypostaseis*, who are perichoretically related, homoousially one, and enhypostatically in one

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[372] Ayman Shihadeh, "The Existence of God," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 206. Shihadeh says that Ibn Taymīyya could not affirm creation *ex-nihilo* or the eternality of the universe.

another *ad extra*. With creation, *Tawḥīd* has to deal with the problem of plurality and difference. Differentiation obtains at the time of creation according to the logic of *Tawḥīd* because this differentiation has no precedent in Allah Himself prior to creation. Differentiation in Christianity has the internal logic of the Trinity's internal differentiation as its precedent. Islam cannot say that Allah just analogically represents the logic of Himself since differentiated reality is antithetical to *Tawḥīdic* Allah. Christianity, however, can affirm that that is precisely what occurs. The logic of differentiation is already set within God the Trinity, and, so, reality is merely an analogical representation of "unity in divesity."

Distinctness

There is no otherness in Allah prior to creation. There is otherness in the Trinity prior to creation in the three *hypostaseis* that God is. There is no recognition and response of another in Allah before creation. There is both response and recognition in God the Trinity prior to creation. In Islam, creation introduces others (otherness), either as illusory (emanation) or a true others (contingent). If creatures are true others, then dualism and/or plurality obtain. This makes Allah the Different One among other different ones, but without any substantiation of how "Allah the One" could produce diversity. If illusory, then others are just apparitions, oddly seeming to be real. This idea of Allah being a Different One among different ones occurs at the time of creation since differentiation prior to this was not. Others are always already present in God the Trinity. The logic of different ones among different ones is inherent in the perichoretic same-nature-onto-relationships that God is. Thus created reality with all its different ones is, again, an analogical representation of the Trinity.

Relatedness

There is no communion in Allah prior to creation; God the Trinity is communion before creation. In Islam, community obtains by creation; in Christianity, community is only patterned after the community that God's *ousia* is by virtue of His perichoretic same-nature-onto-relationships. If reality is illusory as some strands of Islamic thought offers, then community is never formed. Christianity refuses to suppose that community is illusory since this would oppose the internal differentiation that the Trinity is and God's self-chosen analogy of humanity in community (Genesis 1:26 – 28; 2:24).[373]

Tanzīh (Dissimilarity), Transcendence, and Creation

Allah's dissimilarity (*Tanzīh*; *Tawḥīd*) likens Allah to creation since differentiation arrives with the coming of creation. Uniqueness before creation has no standing in Allah since uniqueness supposes difference, but there is no difference internally or externally to Allah prior to creation. God the Trinity has room for uniqueness and dissimilarity in the *hypostaseis* God is. In Him, difference is already conveyed in the *Hypostaseis*, and uniqueness is only an extension of the idea of difference. Christianity takes creation as an analogical representation of who and what God is, but otherness in humanity is different than that of the Trinity since human otherness entails separateness whereas the homoousial and hypostatic otherness in the Trinity is inseparable. Christianity does not hold that God is totally dissimilar to creation, but, instead, says that creation is similar and dissimilar to Him (which is what an analogy does; Gen. 1:26 – 28; 2:24; Rom. 1:20). The affirmation of Allah's utter transcendence, i.e., dissimilarity, (*Tawḥīd*; historic attributes; Surah 112) violates the dissimilarity it is aiming to establish because the logic of one-and-another is entirely creaturely according to Islam, and so, likens Allah to creatures

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[373] Torrance, *Divine and Contingent Reality*, 34 – 38.

rather than distances Him from them. It cannot be claimed that Allah is "utterly other" without violating the claim: it is self-referentially defeating. Muslims who hold that Allah is utterly other (radical transcendence) cannot claim that nothing from creation is predicable of Allah, but then affirm that the positive attribute of *Tawḥīd* is known. It is a contradiction. If Al-Ghazālī's analogical predication is permitted, then Allah is the same to humanity in some ways and disparate from them in others. Can "otherness," though, be predicated of Allah even on Al-Ghazālī's analogical process of predication? If "otherness" is a predicate only proper to creatures, then it cannot, but, if it cannot, then how is it possible to think that Allah is transcendent but still accessible?[374] Transcendence on Christianity allows for dissimilarity to stand (omniscience, self-sufficient, etc.) while allowing the "one-and-anotherness" of creatures to analogically represent God the Trinity's "one-and-anotherness" that the *hypostaseis* are perichoretically. The logic of "one-and-another" of creatures analogically represents the divine reality in Christianity while it is altogether contrary to Allah as lone and solitary in Islam.

Semantic Matters towards describing Allah vis-à-vis the Trinity

Representing what a lone unicity is prior to creation in Islam is difficult to convey semantically because once someone tries to articulate it, they are in violation of the lone unicity idea they are seeking to put forward. The Trinity before creation is more tenable based on the creaturely analogy of "one-and-another" that is represented all over creation. The Trinity is never lonely, so to think of God the Trinity in lone terms is always to not attend rightly to the Trinity. Thus, the one relating to the Trinity is affirming the reality He tries to understand. He is always an "other" thinking of "another" (and so two), thus experiencing "one-and-anotherness"

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[374] "Transcendence" implies "other," "separate," or "distinct." If "otherness" is not applicable to Allah because it is a predicate only proper of creatures, then stating that Allah is transcendent will have to make use of an equivocal meaning for the implied notion of "otherness" entailed in "transcendence." Thus, the claim that Allah is transcendent will predicate "otherness" equivocally, leaving whatever "otherness" means of Allah in no way the same to what "otherness" means predicated of creatures. Thus, Allah's "otherness" will be unknown (agnostic).

analogically to the "one-and-anotherness" of the Trinity. In a strict way, nothing in creation resembles *Tawḥīdic* Allah if irreducible complexity is true, so how does affirming *Tawḥīd* not become vacuous without holding to a doctrine of creation as illusion?[375] Everything in creation in its diversity in unity, and human in their intersubjective relationships, analogically represents the Trinity. To affirm God the Trinity's oneness and distinctions is accomplishable although not without its *mysterium*.

Humanity as Image of Allah vis-à-vis Image of Trinity

No personal distinctness is internal to *Tawḥīdic* Allah, either before or after creation. On the contrary, personal distinctness is always in God the Trinity before and after creation. The fact that humanity would be created to be personally distinct from others is antithetical to Allah's immanent nature as lone, but the Trinity is the antitype for the analogical representation of humans as distinct from others. Human persons are always in relationships anywhere they are; similarly, God the Trinity, as humanity's antitypical logic, whether focused on the Father, the Son, or the Spirit, represents this truth. The *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity are only who They are based on their *enhypostatic* relationships. Thus, that any particular human is who they are by virtue of the relationships he or she is in is not strange.[376] This is only an analogical representation of God the Trinity, but antithetical to Allah unless Muslims concede that Allah's identity is constituted together with the creatures He comes into relationship with after creating (making Allah dependent).

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[375] For instance: Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell* (Harper's Collins, 2009). Kindle. Perhaps a Muslim might try to appeal to the cosmological idea of a singularity as representing Allah. This will not work, though. Because Allah is the Creator, the singularity stands in relationship to Allah, thus constituting two things. How would diversity come out of absolute oneness in the first place?

[376] Humans become who they will be as well since they are finite, and so, they lack completion, needing to become so as to be overcoming this finitude.

Allah as the personalizing One vis-à-vis the Trinity as the personalizing One

The nature of Allah indicates that if Allah is the Personal One and the One who personalizes, then becoming truly a person would take exclusion of others. Solitude is necessary to replicate how Allah existed and how, in a different way, He exists now. In this sense, community is always in the way of any person becoming personalized since such community is always an invasion of the necessary solitude to become personal. Contrarily, God the Trinity as the Personal One and the One who personalizes, based on the inner logic of the *Hypostaseis* in intra-relationships, manifests that community is necessary for someone to become truly personal. Only by being for, with, and in others can someone become personal, that is, truly human — hence the two greatest commands. Also, as worked out in chapter three, the Qur'an and Allah showed an inherent tension in this regard because the Qur'an commanded humans to be persons in a different way than how Allah is a Person, eternally as well as presently. Of course, if the Muslim's denial of humanity's similarity to Allah is correct, the problem is partly resolved. Above, however, I reviewed why the Muslim claim to the fundamental dissimilarity between Allah and humans is significantly unconvincing.

The Formula of Lover, Beloved, and Love predicated of Allah vis-à-vis the Trinity

The formula of lover, beloved, and love is heavily different in Islam than in Christianity. The formula in Islam can be restated as self, self, and self. Allah is the Lover, He loves Himself (beloved), and the activity of that love is only Allah Himself. In Christianity, the Father is the Lover, the Son the Beloved, and the Spirit the personal communion and activity who is Love. The formula in Christianity can be restated as "one among others in loving communion and those others with the one," the Father is for, with, and in the Son, the Son in the same way of the Spirit and the Father, and the Spirit is for, with, and in the Father and the Son.

	Tawḥīdic Allah		The Trinity	
	Without Creation	With Creation	Without Creation	With Creation
Is humanity similarity to the Deity?		Official stance is that humanity is utterly dissimilar; many teachings in Islam contradict this (as above)		Humanity is made in the Image of God; humanity is God's supreme analogy
What does oneness mean?	A lone unicity, unipersonal and simple; no external or internal differentiation	A lone unicity, unipersonl and simple; external differentiation created in an antithetical way to Allah's lone existence	Three homoousial *Hypostaseis* perichoretically related constituting internal differentiation but no external differentiation	Three homoousial *Hypostaseis* perichoretically related (internal differentiation); external differentiation created in an analogical way to the Trinity's internal differentiation
What does distinctness mean?	No otherness, distinctness; no recognition and response to another	Otherness, distinctness introduced by Allah's creating; this otherness handled as illusory or contingent	Otherness, distinctness represented by the *Hypostaseis*; *Hypostaseis* recognize and respond	Otherness, distinctness comes by creation as an analogical representation of the otherness, distinctness in the Trinity
What does relatedness mean?	No communion	If contingent, communion obtains in contrast to Allah's nature; if illusory, then communion does not obtain but only apparent	Trinity is communion	Community of humanity is an analogical representation of the Trinity's communion
What does *Tanzīh* or transcendence mean in view of creation?	Does not apply since There would need to be something from which to be different for transcendence or dissimilarity to obtain	Since difference occurs by creation, dissimilarity likens Allah to creation rather than utterly distancing Him from it; further, that the 99 beautiful names' needed analogical explanation from humanity violates Allah's attribute of dissimilarity	Difference is always already among the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity; transcendence does not occur though until creation	Transcendence of the Trinity is extends beyond the sameness entailed in analogical predication, allowing for sameness between creation and the Trinity and strict disparity as well (which is what an analogy does)
Does humanity analogically resemble the Deity?	No personal distinctness in Allah	No personal distinctness in Allah; personal distinctness comes with creation, making Allah dependent on creation for His relationships; Allah's nature is *antithetical* to human existence as one-and-another, unity-in-diversity	There is personal distinctness as one-and-another, unity-in-diversity	There is personal distinctness as one-and-another, unity-in-diversity; *ergo*, the Trinity is the *antitype* of humanity as one-and-another, unity-in-diversity
How is a human to become truly personal based on the ontology of the Deity?	Solitary and lone	Humans would need to avoid community so as to be solitary and alone to achieve becoming like Allah	Community: for, with, in others	Humans would need to make sure to uphold community by motions of "for-ness," "with-ness" and "in-ness"; this makes sense of the two greatest commandments
How is the formula, lover, beloved, and love to be understood?	Self, Self, and Self	Humans are a means to articulating Allah's self-love as this vortex of Self, Self, and Self; if humans replicate what Allah does in this love, narcissism is love	One for the Others, with the Others, and in the Others; the Father for, with, in the Son and Spirit, the Son, the Father and Spirit, the Spirit, the Son and Father	Humans are to be for others, with others, and in others in order to analogical represent the Trinity

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Return to the Thesis in View of Paratactic Comparison

This dissertation aimed to inquire into the nature of the Deity in view of human relationships. Humanity's relational reality is constituted by distinctness, relatedness, and oneness (hereafter this will just be referred to as "human reality"). Every human is in an inescapable context of these three things, and these three things are intuitively evident; even as someone reads this, they assume these. In short hand, does Christianity's doctrine of Trinity or Islam's doctrine of *Tawḥīd* more adequately explain human relationships and their irrefragable inescapability? Although much of this dissertation moved back-and-forth between focusing on the nature of the Deity with creation and focusing on it without creation, in conclusion, it is the immanent reality of the Deity that is of primary concern. Accordingly, the following comments emphasize the nature of the Deity when thought without from creation.

The oneness every person has with other persons due to either biological (offspring; sex) or cognitive oneness intimates — based on the likeness of humanity to the Deity in either Islam or Christianity — a reality of persons in a union, which constitutes who they are as this oneness. Allah as the *Tawḥīdic* Deity does not have a framework where His oneness is constituted with any others, internally or externally, especially as He is immanent in Himself. God the Trinity, however, is a oneness that is *ousia* in divine-onto-intra-relationships, explaining the *ousia*-like oneness of humanity (biological) and the human cognitive oneness experienced with others *via* their interrelationships among other persons. God the Trinity explains the reality of human oneness while Allah's oneness can only explain a singular person, isolate and alone, which does not represent how human reality exists. In terms of explanatory depth, *Tawḥīdic* Allah lacks resources to explain the biological and cognitive oneness each human experiences every single day of his life. Allah has no oneness within Him that is constituted by union with others, either in

nature (in *ousia*) or cognitively (meeting of the minds/*Hypostaseis*/persons). To ground the oneness humanity experiences finds no basis in Allah, which enlarges the ambiguity in seeking to explain human oneness according to Islam. Why should the way humans experience oneness be this way if Allah's oneness is not that way? Reliance on the attribute of Allah's dissimilarity as a means of escape will not suffice since, as the foregoing arguments have demonstrated, predicating dissimilarity to Allah likens him to humanity rather than distances Him from humanity. Recalling the logic of *Tawḥīd*, there was no one for Allah to be in cognitive oneness with before creation. That humans could come into cognitive oneness with Allah does not help Islam's case because this is not a resource mined from what Allah is immanently. Instead, the possibility of this oneness is a creational resource, only possible with the coming of creation, but the resource is not patterned after the nature of Allah. For argument's sake, though, suppose that a Muslim appeals to the attribute of dissimilarity to successfully escape the question of why humanity experiences oneness so differently than Allah's *Tawḥīdic* oneness. Even with a successful escape, the ambiguity of explicating the human reality of oneness would not be assuaged in the least. The doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah would still lack resources — or at least humans would not know what they are — to explain the human reality of oneness. The doctrine of Trinity, on the contrary, has resources to explain humanity's experience of both biological oneness and cognitive oneness. Biological oneness is analogically explained by the *homoousia* of the one God and human cognitive oneness is analogically undergirded by the *Hypostaseis*' thinking as one — along with willing and acting. The doctrine of the Trinity has sufficient resources to explain humanity's biological and cognitive oneness. Furthermore, clarifying how the nature of the Trinity undergirds and elucidates humanity's oneness is done with relative ease.

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The distinctness of each human person is obvious, but this distinctness is never bereft of others' influence. Hence, human reality only has a definition of "distinctness" within a context of others. Allah, as lone, neither internally nor externally differentiated before creation, has no category of "difference" or "distinct" at all. There is no "one-and-another" in Allah before creation, and so, Allah does not explain the human reality of distinct persons among other distinct persons. The explanatory depth of the doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah cannot even break the dirt towards grounding "one-and-another." Further, Allah's ability to be a Different One among different ones comes with creation. There is no distinctness pre-creation, and *certainly* zero personal distinctness by virtue of Islam's doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah. The Trinity, however, is precisely *Hypostasis*-among-*Hypostaseis*, each One who They are based on the perichoretic and homoousial intra-relationships the one God is immanently. Their *ousia*, action, volition, and thought are one without dissolution of the distinct *Hypostaseis*. By analogy, each human person's thought is his thought as always heavily enriched with the influences' of that distinct person's relationships. This contour of distinctness in human reality is easily explained by the nature of the Trinity, the explanatory depth burrowing deep into the ground. Human persons are always distinct within personal relationships that influence who someone is; the divine *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity are always distinct by virtue of the personal relationships that God the Trinity is immaently.

Finally, what of relatedness? Every human is always related from conception, never alone.[377] Allah, though, was ever alone. He had no relationships beyond that of with Himself. If someone suggests that Allah's knowing of Himself constitutes a grounding for knowing another, then such an equivocation would need to be clearly spelled out. There is a reason, after all, why

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[377] A human life begins at conception. Cf. Job 10:11 – 12 and Psalm 139:13 – 14.

there is language for reflective thought and separate language used for thinking of others — like just done. This is a sleight of hand, making knowing self to mean knowing another; these are two different notions, and one cannot be reduced or made convertiable with the other.

Still, someone might persist. It is evident that Allah is omniscient according to Islam. He is unlike a human person in the sense that a human, having limited knowledge of himself, might find something out about himself that seems altogether alien to him. It cannot be thought that how humans discover things about themselves is also something the Deity does since omniscience barrs such a possibility. If someone teaches that Allah can discover Himself in order to ground relating in His nature, this is tantamount to making Allah ignorant of Himself in some manner — a heavy price to pay. Another objection is conceivable. If God the Trinity is omniscient, then how can the *Hypostaseis* know One Another as distinct persons, which suggest some independent consciousness not perichoretically shared among Them? A difficult objection this is indeed; nevertheless, the comments made earlier that referential identity of the content of thought/speech does not preclude creative stylizations among the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity: the New Testament does point to such a reality. Thus, Their thought/speech is one, but always as a creative symphonic play as onto-thought (extending the idea of onto-relationships of Torrance). The Triunity of thought owes to the Oneness of thought as much as the Oneness of thought owes to the Triunity of thought. Once these past two assertions are purified of their temporal limitations, the idea of sequence (distance of time) is removed, making the Oneness of thought of the Three a harmony with no intervals, spatial or temporal, to suggest any separation. The One God is the same-nature-intra-relationships of the *Hypostaseis*, and so, there is no way to "get behind" this reality to parse out a thought as merely belonging to One of Them. In short, God is always already diverse in all His unity of thought. There is mystery here, and we cannot go

further without losing grasp of the concrete, economic revelation of Jesus Christ. To go so far —

but to explain as much as one can — and no farther is a mantra that both Islam and Christianity

sing.

Tawḥīdic Allah is alone, and He has no relationships. The Trinity is always *koinōnia*.

Allah, even after creating and so relating, has no relationships with equals. The Trinity is always

a communion of equals, although with the allowance of *taxis*. The Trinity sets a basis by which

to understand relationships among equals with certain orderliness to it. *Tawḥīdic* Allah, however,

can only set forth an example of superior to inferior type relationships. *Tawḥīdic* Allah cannot

explain human reality because human reality is always relational; Allah, immanently, is

antithetical to this human reality. Not only does there seem to be no explanatory depth, Allah's

Tawḥīdic nature is inimical to human relational reality. *Tawḥīdic* Allah cannot explain the mere

existence of relationships, and He especially cannot explain their inescapability, having been

isolate and lone for eternity past. The Trinity does explain both the mere existence of

relationships and their inescapability. Since God the Trinity is only who He is based on the

homoousial and perichoretic relationships He is immanently, each *Hypostaseis* of the Triune God

is only who He is by virtue of the other Two being "in" Him, and so, related to Him. Human

reality is the same in some ways. Each human person is who they are by virtue of her

relationships (but not denying their distinctness and separateness in them), and humans are

always in relationships everywhere they are just like God the Trinity is always in relationships.

Again, there is both ease and elucidation attributed to the doctrine of God the Trinity's

explanatory depth on human relational reality. For every human, there is a matrix or web of

relationships that are inescapably proper to him. Wherever he goes, those relationships append to

him (foregoing memory corruption or other brain illnesses).[378] Said differently, those relationships are part of him; they inhere in him to the extent that they reside in him by means of his mind, memory, and thought. Likewise, Each One of the *Hypostaseis* of the Trintiy is Who He is based upon His coinherent relationships to the other Two, Who constitute the matrix of God the Trinity's intra-relational reality. *Perichoretically,* the *Hypostaseis* are in One Another *ad extra.*[379]

At this point, the objection that the Trinity still leaves questions, or generates new ones, about how the nature of the Triune God accounts for human reality could be posed. This is as it should be. The person who poses this question, however, cannot impose a standard on just how much has to be explained for a theological hypothesis (i.e., an nature of the Deity) to be satisfactory. Where would this interrogator get such a "satisfactory" standard? In this sense, what are in competition are worldviews. Criteria are deployed by which to measure the success of a theological hypothesis — or a worldview hypothesis since some are not theistic. These criteria act as a control on the project and against the researcher's biases. This dissertation tested two models of the Deity to see which better accounts for human reality in terms of explanatory scope and depth. Yes, the Trintiy could leave more questions about human reality, but we are interested in whether or not God the Trinity answers more questions about it than Allah. So far, the Triune God's explanatory depth delves far deeper than that of Allah.

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[378] It may be objected that earlier it was argued that conceiving "others" in one's mind did not constitute actual "otherenss." This argument stands unimpeded because what is argued here is that humans engage actual others, and then, those relationships are proper to him by means of memory/mind. The argument here is not postulating that the mind's conceiving provides a basis for "otherness," but that the mind is used to continue in relationships with others that already actual are and have actually been engaged as true others.

[379] That is, to the utter ends, in all the divine space: everywhere One is, so also are the Others, as thought about in terms of a spatial analogy.

The Trinity explains human reality better than *Tawḥīdic* Allah in each individual category of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness. The cogency of these explanations is multiplied by the cumulative case the three explanations have together against Islam. The scope of this inquiry included the mere existence of human relationships, their inescapability, and investigation into oneness, distinctness, and relatedness. The doctrine of *Tawḥīdic* Allah could account only marginally on the contour of oneness while the rest of the scope hardly had any explanation or grounding. God the Trintiy could account for the entire scope and could do so in substantial ways as noted in the earlier comments on explanatory depth. Human reality is a reality of biological and cognitive oneness; so also is the Trinity's oneness in terms of *ousia* and distinct cognitive stylizations among Them. *Tawḥīd* does little to explain the human reality of oneness since it can only get so far as an imagined singular person outside of a context of relationships — which no one has ever experienced concretely. There is no such thing as distinctness in *Tawḥīdic* Allah (pre-creation), but there ever is in God the Trinity. Human reality is one marked by being distinct although not alone (and separate), and so also is it with the *Hypostaseis* who unitarily constitute the Trinity but not with Allah. Allah has no relationships before creation and no equality of relationships ever, forever loving Himself. God the Trinity is a community of co-equal *Hypostaseis* in loving communion. Human reality is relationships, and so it is with the Trinity, but not with Allah. In each category, the Trinity explains human reality in far greater ways than *Tawḥīdic* Allah. Together, the case for the Trinity and against *Tawḥīdic* Allah is made all the more potent. The Christian doctrine of Trinity has greater explanatory depth and scope over the *Tawḥīdic* doctrine of Allah in accounting for human relationships, their inescapbility, and the specific relational contours of oneness, distinctness, and relatedness. *Tawḥīdic* Allah sets

no basis for the inescapability of human relationships since He is ever the lone Deity whereas the Trinity is forever the God who is community.

<center>Ramifications of this Study</center>

Hospitality through serious Consideration

This paratactic comparison lays out a number of things. First, Christians should show hospitality and respect in their dialogues with Muslim. This can be done both in demeanor and by taking Muslim concerns serious. To this end, this dissertatin has tried to listen to the voices of some of the most prominent figures in Islamic history. At the midway point of writing, I consulted with two local Islamic leaders both in regard to some of my content and, especially, to see what they thought about my selection of historic Muslim representatives. Both Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymīyya were applauded, but they knew little of Ibn 'Arabī. Furthermore, *Tawḥīd* is itself an emphasis in Islam, but not just *an* emphasis. It is the emphasis that has an influence on all of Islam. What is important to Muslims has been upheld by centering this work's attention on it.

Is the Deity of Christianity the Deity of Islam?

This close comparison of these two Abrahamic faiths analytically demonstrates that Christians and Muslims do not worship the same Deity. Although someone may object that this only becomes clearly demarcated in view of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed and the Trinitarian exposition of Scripture that it represents, the New Testament is itself strongly binitarian ("God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ . . ."). Moreover, it can be argued that the Book of Ephesians can be designated triadic in the way it deals with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit (e.g., Eph. 1:17, 2:20 – 22).[380] The claim that Christians and Muslims do not worship the

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[380] Letham, *The Holy Trinity*, 73.

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same Deity is demanded mostly by the unipersonal nature of Allah, i.e., He is a unicity. In view of *perichōrēsis*, each *Hypostasis* of the Trinity is rightly called *autotheos* (God in Himself), or using Athanasius' terminology, *holoklēpos hē theotēs* ("complete Godhead").[381] To recall, for one of the *Hypostasis* to be removed from the *ousia* of the one LORD God is to remove a wholative-constitutive *Hypostasis*. The one LORD God would be deprived of a *Hypostasis* that was wholly definitive (and interpenetrating) of who the one LORD God is in Himself. There can be no objection to such a thought even if it cannot be replicated in creation so long as it is Christianity's right to define its doctrines.[382] For instance, to ask the question of how there can be room for the other Two *Hypostaseis* if one of the *Hypostaseis* is wholly constitutive of the one LORD God is only to think compositionally about something that can never be thought about in terms of composition. To force this upon a Trinitarian understanding of God is an unwelcomed and inaccurate intrusion from outside Christianity's long doctrinal history of *perichōrēsis* — anyone who has studied the doctrine from Athanasius and the Cappadocian Fathers forward knows that compositional thinking about the one LORD God is anathema. Instead, *perichōrēsis* maintains that each *Hypostasis* has the other two *Hypostaseis* enhypostatically indwelling Him *ad extra*; there is "no space" in which one *Hypostasis* abides where the other Two are not immanently present. The point of this brief recap is that the one LORD God is tripersonal (τρεις ὑποστασεις) oneness (μια οὐσια), but Allah is unipersonal (μια ὑποστασις) oneness (توحيد). To remove one *Hypostasis* of the Trinity is to dis-integrate the God that, once ruptured in this way, is no longer *the* God. Therefore, to move in one's thought from Trinitarian monotheism (Christiantiy) to unipersonal monotheism (Islam) is to do radical violence to the Triune God.

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[381] Athanasius, *Ad Serapionem*, 1.16 and 24.

[382] Although no one thing directly replicates the Trinity in creation, abstracting certain ideas and combining them into one achieves a working theoretical knowledge of God the Trinity, even if that knowledge is flawed and partial.

Tawḥīdic Allah and God the Trintiy are not convertible, so they cannot be exchanged (in thought

or as objects of worship) as though they roughly represent the same thing. In New Testament

thought, to have the Son is to have the Father (1 John 2:23; 2 John 9). They are a package, but

the Son *is* the Gate to the Father. Whoever accepts the Son, this person necessarily accepts both

the Father and the Son. As noted formerly, to think about One of the *Hypostaseis* of the Trintiy

always entails thinking about All of Them. Just as this point is made in the New Testament (esp.

John 14 – 17; Mt. 11:27; Rom. 8), so this point was made across the course of this dissertation —

it is a package deal.

John of Damascus and Timothy of Baghdad were right in their analysis that taking away

God's Word or His Spirit would be blasphemy and a mutilation of God. Timothy states it well: ".

. . if one separates from God His Word and His Spirit, He will cease to be a rational and living

God . . . to say about God that there was a time in which He had no Word and no Spirit, such a

one would blaspheme against God, because his saying would be equivalent to asserting that there

was a time in which God had no reason and no life."[383] John of Damascus' critique of Islam's

view of the Deity is as precise as it is forceful:

> For the word, and the spirit, is inseparable from that in which it naturally has
> existence. Therefore, if the Word of God is in God, then it is obvious that He is
> God. If, however, He is outside of God, then according to you, God is without
> word and without spirit. Consequently, by avoiding the introduction of an
> associate with God you have mutilated Him. It would be far better for you to say
> that He has an associate than to mutilate Him, as if you were dealing with a stone
> or a piece of wood or some other inanimate object. Thus you speak untruly when
> you call us Hetaeriasts; we retort by calling you Mutilators of God.[384]

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[383] Timothy of Baghdad, *Apology for Christianity*, pt. 1: The Questions and Answers of the First Day. Kindle.

[384] John of Damascus, *On Heresies*, chap. 101. The term "Hetaeriasts" means "those who associate someone with the Deity."

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These comments resonate well with this dissertation's findings precisely because there is

analogical reasoning occurring in both. Although both that God is Spirit and that He is clearly

"rational" (*Logos*) are revelatory givens, the analogical human correlates cannot be overlooked

in the epistemic grasping of what this means. If humanity had no spirit and no ration, whatever it

would mean for God to have either of these will be unknown to humanity or will remain forever

ambiguous. If humanity has both spirit and ration, then this experience functions as the

analogical correlate by which to grasp, to some certain degree, how God is/has Spirit and *Logos*.

For both Timothy of Baghdad and John of Damascus, God's revelation that He is Spirit and

Logos are evident in the Scripture, and these are further supported by the constitution of

humanity.[385] The intuition of the similarity between the Deity and humanity undergirds their

thinking, as just cited. It is not to be missed that this intuition is also a revelatory data-point

because God chose humanity as His supreme analogy. These quotes bring out an assumption that

might not be shared by Muslims at that time. Is humanity similar to the Deity so that humanity is

a reliable analogy? Both John of Damascus and Timothy of Baghdad are arguing not long after

the establishment of Islam as a religion (roughly 150 years afterwards), so clearly demarcated

lines on matters of analogical predication are unlikely in view of the great theological debates

during the 8th – early 9th century within Islam.[386] This seems probable since the debate of the

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[385] Before both John and Timothy get to their analogical reasoning, they have already mentioned the Scripture's role in formulating their viewpoints. Timothy says, "We believe in Father, Son and Holy Spirit as one God. So Jesus Christ *taught* us, and so we have learnt from the *revelation* of the books of the prophets" (italics mine). John argues, "We say to them in rejoinder: 'The Prophets and the Scriptures have delivered this to us, and you, as you persistently maintain, accept the Prophets. So, if we wrongly declare Christ to be the Son of God, it is they who taught this and handed it on to us.'" Timothy of Baghdad, *Apology for Christianity*, The Questions and Answers the First Day; John of Damascus, *On Heresies*, chap. 101.

[386] Timothy may have been a contemporary of John for some time, but evidently Timothy was a generation after John and died around 823 C. E. Timothy I, *Apology for Christianity*, introduction by Rendel Harris, vol. 2, WOODBROOKE STUDIES: CHRISTIAN DOCUMENTS IN SYRIAC, ARABIC, AND GARSHUNI, ed. and trans. with a critical apparatus by A. Mingana (Cambridge: Cambride W. Heffer & Sons Limited, 1928); Hieronymus Labourt, *De Timotheo I: Nestorianorum Patriarcha (728 – 823) et Christianorum Orientalium Condicione sub Chaliphis Abbasidis* (Paris: Apud Victorem Lecoffre, 1904); John of Jerusalem, *Life of John of Damascus*. This work contains

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createdness or uncreatedness of the Qur'an will not be settled until after the death of both John and Timothy.[387] Official rule on how the Qur'an is to be interpreted, as analogically predicating creaturely realities of Allah or not, surely depends on its nature as created or uncreated.

The assertion that Christians and Muslims are not worshiping the same Deity can be made more pointedly: can someone still worship the one LORD God if the Son is removed as an object/Person of worship? Or said differently in New Testament terminology, can someone refuse the affirmation that "Jesus Christ is LORD" and still worship the one LORD God (Phil. 2:6 – 11; 1 Cor. 12:3; Rom. 10:9)? The Greek of the same is stated, "*Iēsous Christos Kurios.*" That *Kurios* is designed to identify Jesus with YAHWAH is an assertion that has been rigourous vetted, and now has become rather uncontroversial.[388] In the rightly celebrated Creed (or hymn) deposited in Philippians 2:6 – 11, the name Jesus Christ is both identified with YAHWEH by *Kurios* and by Paul's modification of the Old Testament text of Isaiah 45:23.[389] Jesus Christ is called *Kurios* in v. 11, and Isa. 45:23 is modified from saying that YAHWEH will be bowed to ("To me every knee shall bow") to "at the name of Jesus every knee might bow . . . ." It should not be overlooked that YAHWEH identifies Himself as Savior just two verses earlier in Isa. 45:21:

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bibliographic data on John Damascene, but is readily admitted to mix legendary stands with those historical. John of Damascus' death was in 750 C. E. The John of Jerusalem is not readily identifiable either, being either John VIII, "who was the patriarch of Jerusalem towards the end of the eleventh century . . . or John IX" following the next century. There is also the possibility that it is one of three Johns who were patriarchs of Antioch in the eleventh and twelveth century. *Patrologia Graeca* 94.429 – 490, trans. Michel Le Quien.

[387] Under the caliph Al-Mu'tasim the createdness of the Qur'an was pushed. The Qur'an's createdness was the state doctrine until 851 c. e. On this and other early central beliefs and controversies in Islam, see the information in the rest of Khalid Blankinship's work (33 – 54). Khalid Blankinship, "The Early Creed," in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic,* 49.

[388] J. A. Fitzmyer, "The Semitic Background of the New Testament kyrios-Title," *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula: Scholars, 1979); Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), sec. 10. Kindle; Larry Hurtado, *How on Earth did Jesus become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 50 – 51.

[389] Dunn, Theology of Paul, sec. 10.4. Kindle.

Môšîa' is the Hebrew term for Savior.[390] This term is cognate with the Hebrew word for salvation, which is Jesus' name, *yᵊšû'â*. A Muslim cannot make this identification, but they instead understand such an identification as *shirk*, the great sin (Surah 4:48, 171). Muslims abide somewhere in the middle of the two responses to Christ that 1 Cor. 12:3 records: "Therefore I made known to you that no one who is speaking in the Spirit of God speaks: "Cursed is Jesus," and no one is capable of speaking, "Jesus is LORD," except in the Holy Spirit" (trans. mine). Muslims cannot become binitarian because of *shirk*, which means the divine Son of God is never part of their worship. The New Testament, however, makes the affirmation of the Son as divine — often by means of the appellation of *Kurios* — the litmus test for worship of the true God. To add further offense, Larry Hurtado has decisively showed that such worship of Jesus was part of the earliest Christianity.[391] In other words, Jesus being worshiped with God was not a corruption of an earlier tradition; Jesus-worship was the earlier (and earliest) tradition.

John of Damascus and Timothy of Baghdad appear to assume that Muslims and Christians do worship the same Deity. What is striking is the referral to the Prophets both John and Timothy make. The referent begs the question of whether they are referring to the notion of the Judaeo-Christian canon of the *Nevi'im* or the Islamic classification of Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus. John's strong accusation, "The Prophets and the Scriptures have delivered this to us, and you, as you persistently maintain, accept the Prophets," seems especially out of place. Why press this point ("as you persistently maintain") if it has no basis of authority according to

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[390] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, God crucified and other Studies on the New Testament's Christology of divine Identity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), chap. 6, sec. 6 and footnote 38 in the same. Kindle.

[391] Probably the most concise treatment is chapter two in *How on Earth did Jesus become a God*, but, for Hurtado's exhaustive argumentation, his *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* should be consulted. Hurtado, "Chapter Two, Devotion to Jesus and Second-Temple Jewiish Monotheistic Piety," in *How on Earth*; Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).

the Islamic canon? They could be talking past one another, however. Or John Damascene knows what Muslims hold to be Scripture, and he is just that confident in his ability to debate from those texts — like the ones the prophet Moses wrote. Whatever the case, the core matter is why these two great Christian apologists accept the Muslims to be worshiping the same Deity. Furthermore, if they accept this, why have I judged differently? There is more than one way to answer this, but a case for rejecting the proposition that Muslims and Christians worship the same God can be made from the term and concept of "Father."

Calling the Deity "Father" is something with which Muslims are neither comfortable nor willing to accept.[392] There is good reason for this just like there is good reason for why Christians are both willing and comfortable with calling God "Father." In view of the comparison done herein, Allah is not an eternal Father but the one LORD God is an eternal Father. As noted many times now, the *Hypostaseis* are only Who They are by virtue of the coinherence with the Others. Although the "Fatherliness" of the one LORD God owes to the properties of the *Hypostasis* of the Father, *perichōrēsis*, or the sharing of the same "divine space," guarantees that the properties of the Father subsist coinherently together with the properties of the Son and the Spirit while protecting the properties specific to the *Hypostasis* of the Father, preventing confusion or mixing. There is no principle of Fatherhood in Allah while there is a principle of Fatherhood, namely the properties of the Father, in the Trinity. How, then, could the "Deity of Muhammad" be the Father of the Son of God? The *Hypostasis* of the Father is the Father of the Son while the *ousia* of the one LORD God is indicative of what is predicable of all three *Hypostaseis*, leaving the distinctions (properties) of the *Hypostaseis* in tact. By virtue of the *Hypostasis* of the Father, and His designation as the *Fons Divitatis*, "Father" is a term

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[392] George, *Is the Father of Jesus the God of Muhammad*, 122. The generalization is noted. S. A. Nigosian, *Islam: Its History, Teaching, and Practices* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 73 – 75.

rightly predicated of both the *Hypostasis* and the *ousia* of the one LORD God.[393] To ask if Allah, as unicity according to the doctrine of *Tawḥīd*, is the Father of Jesus Christ is to ask a question that is historically only askable of a Father, an emphasis Jesus brings out after His resurrection: "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go with my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 20:17: Esv). There is a distinction in the way God is the Father to humanity (your Father) and in the way God is a Father to Jesus; Jesus never calls God His Father together with others. The point is that the emphasis of God as Father is a Christian one, not an Islamic one. To suppose that Christians and Muslims worship the same God as Father, at least if done by a Christian, is to impose a term and concept onto the Islamic notion of Allah, which is foreign to how Muslims think of Him. Of course, all of the complicated argumentation may be unnecessary. It is enough to note that "Father" is not a term predicable of Allah before creation, and Muslims are not comfortable with it even applied to Him after creation.

How, then, is God the Trinity and Allah the same Deity? Their natures radically differ before creation according to each religion's respective doctrines. God as Father is an essential feature in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and in Trinitarian articulation. Is God as Father cast aside so easily for the sake of identifying with Muslims even if for evangelistic and missiological purposes? Muslims think that the peoples of the book (Jews and Christians) worship the same Deity, but this is because the Qur'an plainly affirms this. Christians, however, are not under any compulsion from their Scripture to think similarly. The aforementioned New Testament texts about "only those who have the Son have the Father" more than subtly suggest that Christians do not worship the same Deity as Muslims. These texts teach that Christians

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[393] Epiphanius, *Haereses*, 73.21; Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 140 – 141.

should be hesitant to identify their Deity with other deities that exclude the Son, which is especially true of Islam because they voraciously deny that Christ is the Son. Perhaps many Christians just do not know how central God as Father is to the entire canon of Scritpure, as the eternal Father of the Son (immanent Father of the Son), as God the Father of creation (= Creator), as the Father of the incarnate Son of God, Jesus Christ, as the Father of reconciled creation (the prodigal Father), and as the Father of believers in Christ. The point is that God as Father is a backbone theme to the entirety of the canon. It cannot be set aside without utterly destroying the narrative of Scripture. There also is the possibility that the New Testament claims that Jews during the time of the writing of the New Testament worship the same Deity as Christians (Rom. 9:4; 10:2) — although these Jews do not have the Son. Supposing so, can a similar claim be made for Muslims? It seems evident that comparing Jews living during the writing of the New Testament and Muslims is comparing apples to oranges. More specifically, some of these Jews believed in YAHWEH with openness to the possibility that Jesus was to be identified with YAHWEH, openness made possible and derived from the Tanahk. Only a partial hardening occurs to Israel (Rom. 9 – 11) after all. Muslims practicing Islam are not in a position of openness but of closeness to this possibility, this closeness made possible and derived from the Qur'an. In short, Jews were in an open-ended role while Muslims are in a closed-ended role.

Thus far, these comments have been limited to the Jews in the 1ˢᵗ century. What of the situation today? The Qur'an demands that Jesus be identified as a prophet, not as God; the Tanakh, however, the Hebrew Scripture, does not deliberate on who Jesus is. Each and every person is unique in their religious journey, so these comments are generalizations at best. It is fathomable that a religious Jew today might have never been posed with making a decision about Jesus. This is not the case with Muslims. They follow the Qur'an, which prescribes that Jesus

(Isa) was only a prophet, not the Son of God. Even today it is possible that a Jewish person is in an open-ended position while the Muslim is still in a closed-ended position because of the teaching of the Qur'an. Said differently, openness to Yahweh through the Hebrew Scriptures does not demand closeness to Jesus as the Son of God (it might even demand openness to Him), but openness to Allah through the Qur'an does demand closeness to Jesus as the Son of God.

To extend the question of the supposed sameness of the Trinity and Allah, is identifying Allah and the Trinity as the same Deity careless or is it born from *prima facie* commonality? Certainly, it can be thought that Christian theologians, pastors, and saints everywhere are interested in finding common ground with Muslims because of similarities between the two religions. Finding similarities does not necessitate that one of the similarities be the worship of the same Deity. Illustrative of this point is karma. At first glance, karma appears to be the same as the principle of "you reap what you sow." After closer examination, it is seen that karma functions on a depersonalized principle of cosmic cause-and-effect instead of the personal reality of God as Judge. In addition, karma supposes former lives that interdict on the current life situation, that is, what someone did in those former lives fates what happens to her now.[394] What appears the same is demonstrably different after investigation of the ontology, or inner functioning, of karma and the "reap what sown" principle. This, however, does not mean there are no similarities between karma and the principle; it does mean that one is not the other. When thinking about these comparisons, the mental imgery of off-centered circles is more helpful than the imagery of being "in" or "out" of a box. The box imagery indicates that one either has it all

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[394] Kathryn McClymond, "Karma," in *The Encyclopedia of Global Religions*, Vol. 1 (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2011); Paul Larson, "Karma," in *Encyclopedia of Psychology and Religion*, eds. David Leeming, Kathryn Madden, and Stanton Marlan (New York: Springer, 2010), 499. The complexity of Karma is well documented in this sources; the definition in the text above represents consistent connotations associated with its long history.

right — or enough of it, *however* that is decided — or not. With off-centered circles, the circles should not be centered, but either justified to the right or left, as follows.
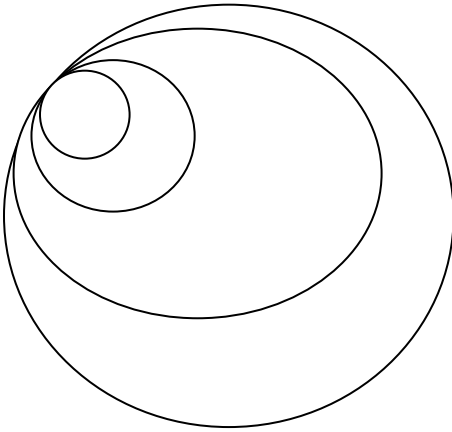
Where each of the circles overlap in the top left indicates perfect theology, truly knowing what is taught in Scripture in one's mind. This, of course, is what salvation and sanctification are all about (in this life and in eternal life), striving for proper thinking expressed in proper action as formed in the image of the *Logos* of God — the double ontondra is intended. The smallest circle indicates doctrine about the Gospel as deposited in 1 Cor. 15:1 – 5, without which the Gospel would no longer be Gospel. The next biggest circle indicates first-order doctrine (monotheism and polytheism would be included here), the next, second-order, and the largest circle, third-order. What is included in each category is highly debatable, but the key for the purposes here is that standing in the smallest circle is to be in salvific standing with God by virtue of the Son: "Now I am making known to you, brothers, the gospel which I myself proclaimed to you, which you indeed received, in which you surely *stand*, through which you certainly are being *saved* — in the certain Word I myself proclaimed to you if you are holding fast [to the certain Word] . . .

."[395] According to the foregoing emphases, the first circle is the Gateway to God, that is, to be in the first circle is to "have the Son." There is a way in which theology is perfectly formed in the mind, namely, where the outer lines of the circles all overlap. Someone could "have the Son" (Gospel), but could be very off in other orders of theology. Thus, for each individual person, their beliefs could be charted on these circles. Pertaining to the Gospel of the Son of God, a Christian who accepts 1 Cor. 15:1 – 5 will have the belief charted within the first and smallest circle. This same person's eschatology could be well off, however, plotting this third-order belielf (debatable of course) in the largest circle far away from where all the lines of the circles overlap. The framework for the entire chart is a theistic universe. Since "no one who denies the Son has the Father" and "whoever confesses the Son has the Father also," there is no way that a Muslim can have the Father, and there is no God without the Father — the same could be said of the other *Hypostaseis* in terms of *autotheos*. Historically, the Father is seen as the *fons divitatis* or the causal unoriginate One in the Trinity, so to exclude Him is a specially strong elimination of God altogether.[396] For a Christian, the smallest circle and the first-order circle will certainly overlap because it is impossible to have the Son without the Father while no other worldviews worship the same God because whoever "denies the Son" does not have the Father. Wherever Islam is plotted in the first order circle, it will not be on the overlapping lines with the smallest circle. Before the objection is raised that the same would go for Jews, the word "denies" in 1 John 2:23 should be highlighted. The teaching of the Qur'an *denies* Jesus as God the Son in one of the most important Surahs, Surah 112. A Jewish person could be aware of Jesus as the Son of God and reject Him. Then, this Jew would be under the darkness of alienation from the Father

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[395] Trans. and italics mine; bracketed words represent implications of the Greek text, but not explicitly written words; 1 Cor. 15:1 – 2.

[396] The asymmetry should impose some discomfort for Trinitarian Christians.

following the doctrine of 1 John 2:23. To recall, however, the Hebrew Scriptures do not preclude, and may oppositely intimate, Jesus as the Son of God. So then, a Jew today could just have no exposure to the Gospel. There are no doubt manifold complications, and the chart could be improved and explicated more richly, but this "ramifications section" is designed to point, not exhaustively expound, so more could be said, but this suffices.

Ethics of Love

There are a number of ethical implications that center around love. The ramifications are not small when dealing with ethics, so this needs considerable attention. Love is a dangerous thing to tamper with, but tamper we must if we are to understand it and live it. The Christian doctrine of God the Trinity is consistent with the two greatest commandments. First, humanity is to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength. Then, they are to love their neighbor as themselves. This is fitting since these two actions occur in the Trinity. In regard to the first greatest commandment, God loves God, which is to say, God the Father (*autotheos*) loves the Son (*autotheos*), and the Spirit (*autotheos*) loves the Son (*autotheos*) and so forth. To love one's neighbor as oneself fits with Trinitarian logic as well. In the Trinity, the Neighbors of the Father, for instance, are the Son and the Spirit, yet these Two are also so intimately indwelling the Father that all Three constitute one *ousia* together. For the Father to love Them is for Him to love Others and, in loving Them, He loves Himself. This love is an out-pouring love (Rom. 5:3), taking the other *Hypostasis* so loved as an end-in-Himself. Someone might say that this is speculative; but it is not. How God loves humanity in His giving of the Son displays a God of preeminent love who is "in it" for others, even weak, dirty, and evil humans (Rom. 8:32).[397] This

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[397] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 6. "In accepting the sinner, Christ applied to communion the Trinitarian model . . . the other is not to be identified by his or her qualities, but by the sheer fact that he or she is, and is *himself* or *herself*. We cannot discriminate between those who are and those who are not 'worthy' of our acceptance. This is what the Christological model of communion with the other requires.

is what the Gospel is about and this is the message of the New Testament. Jesus links the Father's love for Him to the Father's giving *kāvôd* (Hebrew for "Glory": John 17:24) to Him, which is the item of greatest gravitas in all reality (cf. the Hebrew term *kāvēd* = weighty). How One of the *Hypostaseis* of the Trinity loves Himself is plain. He does this by always giving of Himself over to the Others, being for Them, with Them, and in Them just as was marvelously displayed in the incarnate life of Jesus Christ. He was for humanity, with humanity, and is now in humanity because He does not leave His beloved to become orphaned (John 14:17 – 18). What is required of humanity, namely, to love God and to love others as oneself, is a mimesis of what the one LORD God does in Himself among the intra-onto-relationships the *Hypostaseis* constitute among One Another.

The backdrop of an interpretive schema based upon the doctrine of God the Trinity ensures against an inherent narcissism overemphasizing the second half of the second greatest commandment: "Love your neighbor *as yourself*" (emp. mine). The narcissitic tendency can put undo weight on self-focus. In the Trinity, for One of the *Hypostaseis* to love Himself never occurs by independently or solely thinking about how He wants to be treated, and then applying that logic to how He treats the other two *Hypostaseis*. Rather, to love Himself is always already for Him to be involved with the other Two, with Them, in Them, and for Them. In the Trinity, since They share perichoretic relationships and one and the same *ousia* together, to love Oneself always occurs by loving Others.To act like the Trintiy in this regard is not to isolate and meditate on how to love others well, and then apply that once it gets figured out — a dangerous centering on how *I* want to be treated. To learn this loving of oneself in the manner consistent with the Trinity requires the practice of giving of oneself, to be for others, with others, and in others. This is an essential selfless love that only recognizes love for oneself as achievable by perpetually

centering-in on loving others. Both the one who loves and the beloved share in one love, edified and rejoicing.

What is the nature of love based on Allah? As the Augustinian formula appropriated to Allah showed, the designations of lover, beloved, and love each only take one person as the referent, Allah. Before creation, this can only mean that the only type of love was a reflexive love, that is, Allah loved Himself. If this love is not to change with the coming of creation, then Al-Ghazālī is right. Creatures become conduits or agents by whom and through whom Allah loves Himself. Allah is not devoted to loving others due to His nature like the Trinity. Instead, His *Tawḥīdic* nature is about loving Himself. After creation, He loves creatures as agents through whom to realize His love for Himself. Creatures are not loved just because they are others, but to the extent they fulfill loving Allah properly — this might be a bit of an overstatement. Nevertheless, the Qur'an does emphasize Allah not loving certain types of persons: boasters (Surah 31:18), arrogant boasters (Surah 57:23), the exultant (Surah 28:76), the unjust (Surah 42:40), unbelievers (Surah 3:32; 30:45), the treacherous (Surah 8:58), unfaithful (Surah 22:38) or ungrateful, mischief-makers (Surah 5:64), the extravagant (Surah 7:31), or those who exceed limits (Surah 2:190).[398] This does fit well with the nature of Allah as *Tawḥīdic* and with the foregone discussion of loving those who fulfill loving Allah properly. If human persons are agents through whom Allah loves Himself, how could this love flow through humans who are disruptive and polluting Allah's commands? Unlike God the Trinity, there is no "one-and-another" in Allah that could act as a basis for the inherent correctness of loving others as a purpose unto itself. Instead, what is found in *Tawḥīdic* Allah is the inherent correctness of loving Himself (or for humans, of loving Allah). "Humans" being "others" is not enough to make them

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[398] This final qualification, "those who exceed the limits," speaks of those who make war without defensive warrants, and it is not speaking of the sin of debauchery, which is defined as "degradation through excessiveness."

worthy of love. On Islam, how could it be? *Tawḥīdic* Allah had no others with Him for eternity past, and otherness (esp. personal otherness) is not part of His constitution. To say that otherness — someone being other than oneself — was a basis of love from an Islamic point of view, would be a repudiation of Allah's love for Himself, which excludes all notions of otherness in its eternal *Tawḥīdic* past. Simply, just existing as "another" is not enough to warrant love from Allah. Love is not linked to this concept of "one-and-another" in the nature of Allah. This notion of "one-and-another" as a basis for what constitutes love is replaced in Allah's *Tawḥīdic* nature with "humans should love Allah because Allah loves Allah," not because Allah is *the* Other, but because He is Allah. When a human loves Allah this is in truth a pathway of Allah's love for Himself that courses through this human person.

This seems to be narcissism. A question every person should ask himself is how he feels when he knows that he is being used as a means to something else. For instance, when someone uses a person for his ends, not because of the value of a person in herself, what intuition comes to mind? This is especially plain in the case of marriage. Men and women who marry for money are spoken of derisively. What drives this pejuritive intuition appears to be the knowledge of improper value. When someone uses a person as a gateway to money, there is an elevation of the importance (value) of money over the person. The person who is spiritual and eternal is lowered in importance below what is material and temporally passing. Of course, the situation is very different when the Deity uses humans to glorify and love Himself because He uses what is dependent in its spiritual and eternal nature (humans) to glorify and love He who is self-sufficiently spiritual and eternal. In this case, what is of lesser value is used for the purposes of the higher value. Even in these cases, though, there still arises the sense that there is some moral impropriety. For instance, killing a thousand to save a million will be bitter sweet because there

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is something inherently right about saving lives, but, at the same time, there is something very wrong about taking these lives even though it means the saving of many more lives. What is found is that there is a conflict between humanty's moral intuitions — that being used is evil — and the rational logic "using lesser things for greater things" makes. A counter-example is readily available against the logic of using lesser things for greater things. It is rationally arguable — although often to be met with moral disgust — that the health and stature of the human species is a higher value than the lesser value of an individual human with genetic defects. Thus, eugenic programs for the elimination of the genetically undesirable are justified on the mere logic of "lesser valued things should be used for the greater valued purposes." A similar example is euthanasia where the good of society (greater value) and conservation of resources for the continued flourishing of human life (greater value) takes precedent over helping an elderly person live. If Allah uses people as conduits for loving Himself, why do humans shutter at some of these ideas as morally repugnant? On Islam's view of love as Allah loving Himself (following Al-Ghazālī), would not the opposite response be expected, that of moral praise and approval? The nature of the eternal love of Allah being self-love (or reflexive love) provides vast questions about human ethics. These issues can only be anecdotablly raised, but they are worthy of further exploration.

A very real question arises about views of the Deity that propagate an essential self-love and self-glorification without any focus on otherness: do these pass muster according to the human experience of love? This question is as much for Islam as for certain trends in Christian circles that emphasize God's self-glorification without attention to the Trinity's essential "one-and-anotherness." It might be supposed that humanity is totally depraved, in the full sense, which would mean that the moral intuitions coming from within humanity are not to be trusted.

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This supposition is an in house Christian matter since original sin does not factor into Islam's protology. Although original sin is a certainty on Christian theism — at least from the time of the Augustine-Pelagius debate — just how to understand the taint sin has upon humanity is debatable. Intuition does provide a resource for theologizing, although the theologian must account for the effect of original sin in the manner he draws from intution. What does intuition intimate about someone who designs plans for others to glorify him? Do we feel loved when someone puts us into these designs? The likely answer is no, but how someone answers will undoubtedly change when the Designer is the Deity. When He is the Designer, this question now has two answers. 1) It is improper for a human to do this, but 2) not for the Deity. *Prima facie*, this appears pious enough, but does this reinforce the notion that lesser valued things should be used for greater valued things? It does, and it does so in the most radical way because what could be a higher value than the Deity's desires? The Deity has the right to do what He wants with His own things — as the imgery of the potter and clay indicates. This logic of ownership is acceptable enough, but does Scritpure support this sort of self-centeredness?[399]

Allah's nature leaves no option but self-centered self-love, and three of the great historic thinkers of Islam do not shy away from such a reality. Whereas Christianity, again, has resources to try to deal with the problem of love becoming narcissism by means of the doctrine of Trinity, Islam has none. Allah's nature based on *Tawḥīd* demands His love to be a self-love because there is no one different from Him to be an object of His love prior to creation. However much Allah is said to love creatures, this cannot be the purest and primal instance of love since to affirm such would make Allah's love dependent on creation. Even if Islam upholds that Allah does love

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[399] God's glory is linked to His giving of the Son, linking God's other-focusedness together with His glorification, overcoming the either/or of either God is glorified in a self-centered way or He glorifies others but not Himself. Cf. John 12:27 – 28.

creatures, this love must be derivative, and must serve Allah's love for Himself. The activity of Allah's love, its form as it were, would change its cyclonic pattern if the derivative love for creatures did not ultimately return to the cyclonic winds of Allah's love for Himself. Rather than Allah's love being definitively a love centered on Himself, it would become a love definitively centered on creatures, or on others. Such "other-focusedness" is inimical to Allah's eternal *Tawḥīdic* nature, which appears to demand that Allah's love for creatures is always ultimately about Him loving Himself. Ibn Taymīyya said that love for creatures is always subordinate to Allah's love for Himself. [400] Al-Ghazālī states that Allah really only loves Himself, and Ibn Arabī affirms the same. [401] Citing these authors at this point is to show that this is not a non-Muslims' view of the *Din* of Islam on the topic of love; these three authors, especially Al-Ghazālī, are representative of major Islamic thinking. On this note, it would be hard to find someone more representative of Islam than Al-Ghazālī, as Volf claims, from any age. [402]

What emerges is a view of love, of the most basic and primal love, which is essentially self-centered. To a non-Muslim ear, this may sound alarming. However, if all creation is illusory or emanational on Islam, as the above authors either teach or suggest, then a human who loves others really loves Allah. Similarly, for Allah to love Himself — creation *qua* emanational or illusory — can occur by loving creatures because they are really only Him. There is, therefore, a possible way for devotees in Islam to prevent their love from transforming into narcissism. Whether this can be done in practice or not is another question. To identify a creature with Allah,

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[400] Ibn Taymiya, *al-Ihtijaj,* I, 374 and II, 115.

[401] Al-Ghazālī, *Religious Sciences*, vol. 6, bk. 36; Ibn Arabī, *Futûhât al-Makkiyya* [*The Meccan Illuminations*], conclusion. The Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society references the conclusion to this work of Ibn Arabī and notes that the ". . . *'ulamâ'* . . . are scandalized by the idea that the All-powerful God could be loved by a miserable creation . . . ." "The experience and doctrine of love in Ibn 'arabî," *The Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabi Society*, trans. Cecilia Twinch, first presented at the Symposium at Worcester College, Oxford, May 4th – 6th, 2002, accessed June 12th, 2014, http://www.ibnarabisociety.org/articles/addas1.html.

[402] Volf, *Allah*, 168.

because creation is believed to be illusory, is tantamount to *shirk*. Hallāj was killed for such identification. Furthermore, majority (Sunni) Islam is hostile to anthropomorphizing in varying degrees depending on the group, sect, or individual. It is hard to see how creation can be viewed as illusory or as emanational without going beyond anthropomorphism to full-fledged pantheism or panentheism. Not to be missed is that non-self-centered love could only be salvaged for the human creatures Allah created. They could be focused on others as apparations who really are Allah; still, a human creature could just as well see himself as an apparation of Allah, making himself the center of his love thereby transforming love into narcissism. Non-self-centered love could be maintained for the devotees to Islam but not for Allah Himself. Indeed, for Allah to do so would be a repudiation of the nature of Allah's eternal love for Himself.

Perhaps, love according to Islam would fare better if creation is considered truly contingent. Human creatures would not be Allah, so could Allah love them? If Ibn Taymīyya's thought is followed, then, yes, He can, but He does so only in a subordinate fashion to how He loves Himself. Allah's love for Himself is preeminent over and proceeds eternally before His love for creatures. Maybe this is why there are so few verses that focus on Allah's unconditional love for creatures in the Qur'an (Surah 5:54 and perhaps19:94 and 20:39), and how many focus on compassion (most of the Surahs include the title "All-compassionate/merciful" attributed to Allah) or love because of proper behavior (e.g., Surah 61:3, 49:9, 60:8 to cite only a few). In one verse, there is a reversal of Jesus' teaching about love and enemies:

Surah 60:1: Do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you of the truth, driving out the Messenger and youselves because you being in Allah, your Lord? If you go forth struggling hard in My path and seeking My pleasure, would you manifest love to them? I know what you conceal and what you manifest; and whoever of you does this, he indeed has gone astray from the straight path.

Matthew 5:43 – 45: You heard that it was said: You will love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I myself say to you: "Love your [pl.] enemies and pray on behalf of the ones who are persecuting you [pl.] in order that you should become sons of your Father who is in heaven [trans. mine, grammatical brackets mine]

Jesus, in the New Testament, says that loving enemies puts a person on the straight path (". . . sons of your Father . . ."), but Allah in the Qur'an declares that His enemies are not to be loved or else the one who does this has gone off the straight path. Is this reversal linked to the nature of Allah? Maybe it is, but who could really judge this without immense historical speculation? On the one hand, the God of Jesus Christ loves His enemies by doing kindly by them, making the sun to arise upon the wicked and sending rain on the unrighteous (Mt. 5:45). Jesus commands the servants of God to act in this manner because that is how God acts. Allah, on the other hand, commands His servants to act like Him. Whoever is His enemy in terms of human persons who are opposed to the *Din* of Allah (Islam; cf. Surah 60:2 ff.), He commands that His servants treat them as enemies as well. This comparison illustrates, tentatively, a difference in taking love as essentially self-centered or other-centered. A love that is other-centered will overcome the failures of this other person so as to love another; love that is self-centered will distance others who fail to uphold and join in that love. The wicked and unrighteous are loved by God in demonstrable ways that the servants of Christ are to mimic while those who oppose Islam — the ambiguity of how to identify who these are is alarming — are neither loved by Allah nor should the servants of Allah love them. Allah's love for Himself takes priority over love for human creatures, which is always "subordinate," to use Ibn Taymīyya's term. This prioritization will

turn love into conditional love because the upholding of Allah's love for Himself, by living as

Allah commands among perhaps others things, is the condition that must be met for Allah's love

to flow through someone.[403] So far as someone lives according to the *Din*, they meet the

condition(s) to be loved by Allah, which is itself to be used by Allah as a conduit for Allah's

loving of Himself.

What to do with the Qur'an's viewpoint of love and how that view syncs (or not) with

Allah's love for Himself is another issue. Should the Qur'an's commands that involve loving

activity be interpreted in view of *Tawḥīd* or not? First, imposing the theme of love onto the

Qur'an has to be modified a bit. The command to "love one another" does not appear in the

Qur'an, but the Qur'an is full of examples and commands about showing mercy and compassion,

which can be unpacked to show the love entailed in them. The notion of mercy in the Qur'an is

similar in its nature to love in the New Testament because both zone in on "giving for the good

of another." Surah 90:17 states, "Then he is of those who believe and charge one another to show

patience, and charge one another to show compassion." The question to ask is, "How should a

person show compassion?" Under the logic of Christian Trinitarianism, showing love is to mimic

the one LORD God both in His immanent relational reality and in His economic dealings with

creatures. Beyond this ontological reality underpinning the act of love, there are the commands

to love. The commands to love are grounded in the Trinity's immanent relational reality, which

means that the commands are not arbitrary, but, instead, invite creatures to mimic the drama of

love ongoing in the one LORD God. To be loving is to be godly, i.e., like God. Since it does not

make much sense to say that Allah shows Allah compassion, the word "love" will have to be

substituted for the term "compassion" in the following discussion. Hopefully, this will not be

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[403] This is more an exploratory thought that definitive; it needs tested hereuistically in theological discourse to prove its worth.

seen as inappropriate since the basis of both the Christian notion of love and the Islamic notion of mercy is "giving for another's good." On the logic of *Tawḥīd*, the immanent reality of Allah's love is one of self-love. Because Allah's love for creatures is always subordinate to His love for Himself, Allah's giving of mercy or love or compassion to creatures is always in service, ultimately, to Himself and in fidelity to His love for Himself. No doubt the servants of Allah must follow the commands of the Qur'an, but how are they to go about following the commands that entail loving activity, like showing compassion or "enjoining one another in goodness (Surah 5:2)?" Are the servants of Allah to mimic Allah's manner of loving? The logic of a human appropriating how Allah loves Himself might go like this: "I love myself, and I allow others to participate in my love of myself so long as they do not interrupt that love because my love for them is always subordinate to my love for myself." It is possible that someone will object that no one should act like Allah in this regard, but the point is, if a human did act like Him, it would be similar to this description. It cannot be forgotten that there is no "one-and-another" in Allah immanently.

Another difficulty arises. Why not just say that Muslims do mimic how Allah economically loves creatures? If the asking of such a question is designed to claim that Allah loves them based on their otherness, then the Islamic doctrine of *Tawḥīd* has been forgotten, which refuses to base love on otherness/difference. Allah loves creatures as a means to loving Himself. Thus, to mimic how Allah economically loves is to love them only as a means to loving Allah: "Love for Allah is preeminent to love for other humans, therefore showing love to other humans always occurs by treating the human loved as a conduit by whom to love Allah." For being an Islamic view on love, this sounds strangely "Christian" in its logic, but three additions should be mentioned. (1) Paul notes that "the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love

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your neighbor as yourself.'"[404] (2) God's giving of the Son of God for humanity to live

demonstrates, as risky as this sounds, that God loves humanity more than He loves Himself

(Rom. 8:32).[405] He died so humans might live. (3) Jesus' identification in Matthew 25 is

shocking; "For I was hungry and you gave me food . . . Lord when did we see you hungry and

feed you . . . And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least

of these, my brothers, you did it to Me." Concerning (1), the immanent logic of the Trintiy

makes "loving another" an end in itself because loving oneself is contained in loving another.

Regarding (2), if God put His love of Himself before His love of humanity, how then would

Christ be crucified? In view of (3), it is the act of love to another human that Jesus praises

because to love others well evidently is to love Christ well, rather than making them a means to

loving Christ well. The bottom line is that the nature of the Trinity displays a love that is

essential "other-focused" while Allah's nature displays a love that is essential self-focused. In

this sense, the Islamic and Christian view of love is radically different. There is some overlap,

however, between the Christian and Islamic view of love *as practiced by believers* in the sense

that for a human to love other humans is to love the Deity. For Christians, to love oneself and

God — by glorifying Him by acting like Him just as commanded — are achieved and contained

in loving others, which is one reason why St. Paul can proclaim that the whole law is

summarized in the second greatest command. For Muslims, humans are means to loving Allah

because humans are, to Allah, a means to loving Himself. Since there is no "one-and-another" in

Allah, for a human to love another well without intending to love Allah through that action poses

a rialry between the devotee's love for Allah and his love for another human. The Muslim must

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[404] Galatians 5:14.

[405] H. R. Mackintosh, *The Person of Jesus Christ* (1912; London: T & T Clark, 2000), 91; Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 209 – 210.

always "subordinate" (Ibn Taymīyya's term) his love for others to his love for Allah whereas a human's love for the Trintiy is contained in loving others because such loving others is mimesis of the Trinity's inner immanent life.

An added question is, "What makes giving this love allowable?" For someone to be "another" is enough for the Christian because God is Trinity, but Allah "loves not" certain types of "others." This means that the Muslim should not love them either if their action is thought to be opposed to the *Din* of Islam. Although Surah 60:1 – 2 is clear that those not to be loved are those who oppose Allah's truth and belief in it, how to determine what constitute's opposition to the *Din* of Islam is ambiguous. Surah 60:1 – 10 records that those who are enemies, but evidently not enemies of the *Din*, can be treated justly and kindly (v. 8). Those who made war on Muslims on account of the *Din* of Islam cannot be befriended. To become friends with these enemies is to become unjust in Allah's eyes (v. 10). The hermeneutical question of how to apply these texts today will have weighty consequences. Verse 1 makes it clear that the Messenger was driven out. These are the enemies of the *Din*, but how would one envisage the Messenger's rejection today?

This section on ethics cannot be emphasized enough. Given recent wars in the Middle East, the radical Muslims' attacks on the world stage, and the increasing poplularity of moderate Islam in the West, what love is and how to practice it deserves much attention. Love will save the world. Whose love can accomplish this is the question. The link between the nature of the Deity and love must be addressed, readdressed, and distributed. It is not enough to say that all religions or even some religions roughly teach the same thing about love. Because of the Trinity's unique nature, shared by other religion or worldview, it is not an overstatement to say that love on Christianity is a Christian love. It is Christian because it is Trinitarian, and it is unique to Christianity because there is only one religion that maintains the Trinity as its doctrine

of the Deity. Islam has its own view of love likewise linked to the nature of Allah. As the foregoing discussion demonstrates, the contours of Islamic love versus Christian love are not the same. They could not be unless the natures of the Deity matched between the two religions; they most certainly do not. How humans practice love, therefore, will differ according to their view of the Deity because the nature of the Deity forms and controls what love is. This cannot be unpacked more, but what appear to be marginal differences in the inner logic of love will result in canyon-sized gaps in the way the differences are enacted in daily life.

Socio-Political Concerns

How should members of society think of one another? Should there be equality among members or inequality? The Western heritage takes the former as a given: equality for all. The thought that largely undergirded this attitude is that all were created in God's image. As such, all must be equal. Islam does not share this vision of humanity made in the image of God, however. There must be another way to ground equality among humans for Islam. As this dissertation has argued, though, maybe Muslims should give up their resistence to anthropomorphizing. If they did, then man could be taken as an image bearer of God, and then, equality among them could be established upon this. Their resistence is readily inconsistent and, because of this inconsistency, uncompelling and little more than a fideist expression with no reasonable defense. Qutb grounded equality among humanity on Allah's *Tawḥīdic* nature.[406] His logic seems to be, "Since Allah is one, so should humanity be." This logic draws a different conclusion than what Qutb hopes. Rather than establishing equal "rights" among members of humanity, *Tawḥīd* questions individual rights altogether. Allah's *Tawḥīdic* nature is not differentiated whatsoever — neither internally nor externally, neither in terms of *Hypostaseis* nor in terms of unretractable attributes

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[406] Qutb, *Milestones*, 25.

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— so how will the importance of individual man be upheld? On the nature of Allah, it cannot be since Allah is one, without distinction prior to creation. His oneness does not include a protection of distinction because there is no distinction in the pure *Tawḥīd* of Allah. Rather, *Tawḥīd* upholds homogeneity for all, not distinctions for all and certainly not rights to protect individual distinction.[407] In the vast ocean of human particularities across the span of this planet, how could such homogeneity be achieved? Is tyranny the only answer, or could every person on the planet be convinced of his or her own freewill to adopt homogenous practices with every single other person on the planet? It is almost frightful to imagine such a set of circumstances of complete homogeneity;[408] it even seems hostile to something that makes humanity humanity, namely, the drive to be different and distinct. Tyranny, then, is the way forward to establish homogeneity because humanity will not be robbed of their distinctions without a fight. Qutb confirms, "This power must be all levels; that is to say, [the Islamic community] must have power of belief and concept, the power of training and moral character, the power to organize and sustain a community, and whatever physical power is necessary, if not to dominate, at least to sustain itself . . . ."[409] This brings up the next point: the Qur'an's most primordial and original vision of a relationship is one of inequality, between Adam and Allah.

The irony of Qutb's aim in his little book, *Milestones*, is that he sought to question all human dominion, reign, and power, before the reign of Allah,[410] but, in his visage of Allah as supreme, he provides a tyrannical paradigm that the rulers he opposes would applaud and

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[407] Qutb, *Milestones*, 69. Qutb is seen to be uninterested in distinctions for all because he claims that the "only valid basis for human life is the religion of Allah and the pattern of life it provides."

[408] The idea that the *'umma* can be uniform is contradicted by Muslim societies today. Kolig says they are neither "homomorphic nor monolithic." Kolig, *Conservative Islam*, 25.

[409] Ibid., 66.

[410] Ibid., 8, 65.

recognize as their own. Allah is *rabb*; Adam is *'bd*, slave. There is no paradigm of equality based

on the theology proper of Islam because Allah is not internally differentiated in terms of

Hypostaseis. The object of Muslims' worship is of a *Rabb* who shares power with no one. Do

humans become like what they worship? This seems likely, but Islam's focus on orthopraxy

cannot be forgotten. How much influence the contemplation of Allah should be accorded in

informing that practice is an open question. The supposition that Christians should contemplate

God to become like Him because humanity is made in His image is not a point of similarity

between Islam and Christianity. The drive to contemplate the Deity will therefore differ between

Muslims and Christians along with the attention paid to that contemplation. Nevertheless, a few

Islamic States do uphold Sharia Law to the extent of disallowing other manners of life, with any

deviance punished. It is not an erroneous intent to think that the theological vision of the

relationship of *Rabb* Allah with *'bd* humanity undergirds and informs hegemonic tendencies.[411]

Such a supposition is not ignorant to other motivations for hegemony like the political, fiscal,

industrial, and societal. The contention is rather that theology must be on this list, and perhaps it

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[411] Gerhard Hoffstaedter, "Islam and freedom of religion: Anthropology, theology and clashes of universalisms in contemporary Malaysia," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 24 (2013), 270 – 289. A recent example comes from Malaysia. After a long rule since 1957 by the National Front, "Malaysia has been transformed into a modern Muslim majority state . . . . Over this time, being Muslim and following Islam have become a politicized identity for the majority of Malay Muslims" (273). The tension grew around religious freedom because "Isalm in Malaysia, especially the dominant Islamic theology as promulgated by national and state Islamic authorities, is not allowed to be questioned by anyone" (274). It was mainly an intraIslam debate. The chavinisim of the "mainstream state Sunni Islam" was being challenged by several Muslim human and women's rights groups. The hegemony of those opposed to the human and women rights groups went so far as to "claim the supremacy of Islam in the public and private sphere [to the extent that] any discussion, even one behind closed doors, was deemed offensive." This led to "Prime Minister Badawi . . . [issuing] a gag order on debates on religious issues. In a speech to the UMNO general assembly in late 2006 Najib, then the deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, referred to constitutional discussion as threats to Islam and to Malays as the protectors of Isalm in Malaysia" (276). Hoffstaedter's essay focues on the anthropological: human life generally and the political facet of that life particularly with an eye to how Islam affects both spheres in Malaysia. He lays out three ways that the anthropologist can relate to and understand the "the theological/religious other" (279). 1) Detachment from the other, 2) experience the other and engage in deep "commonion with another lifeworld or ontology," or 3) become a mediator and translator of that other. It stands out that Hoffstaedter assumes a contingent reality where others truly engage, but it is clear from the research done in this work that many Muslims might not understand the Allah-world relationship in that way. Hoffstaedter three ways to handle the other brings up the question of from where these three came. How to handle "others" is the matter at hand above. The question being asked is, "How much does Allah's ontology, or *Tawḥīd*, influence a Muslim's viewpoint on the other?"

should be weighted more greatly than other items. Is Allah *Tawḥīdic*? Yes, He is, *ergo*, homogeneity is affirmed. Is Allah alone with no equals? Yes, that is right, *ergo*, sole tyrannies are the human performances of this quintessential theology of the inequality of relationships. Muslims do have other ways to uphold equality, but it is a significant concern that a vision of *Tawḥīdic* Allah does not.[412] *Rabb* Allah is no community and has no equality with anyone. These concerns could be contested on the basis of certain teachings from the Qur'an, but they would not be completely dispersed. Allah remains who and what Muslims worship, and how Allah exists and His nature are matters a devotee thinks about. *Tawḥīdic* Allah remains a significant influence on the religious Muslim as the popularity of Al-Ghazālī's *Revival of the Religious Sciences* testifies.[413] Both what the Qur'an teaches and Allah's nature have to be treated as separate influences on Muslims because the Qur'an is not strictly a revelation of the identity of Allah. In Christianity, Scripture is identified with revealing God's identity and God's will for humanity, but this is not how revelation is understood in Islam. It is primarily about revealing Allah's will for humanity. A very different picture is given in the nature of the Triune God. God the Trinity is internally differentiated community as Father, Son, and Spirit, a community of equality. Here again, as with the idea of love earlier, the nature of the Deity is going to affect the notion of community and the fabric of how relationships are understood.

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[412] Norani Othman, "Grounding human rights arguments in non-western culture: Shari'a and the citizenship rights of women in a modern Islamic nation-state," in *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, eds. J. R. Bauer and A. Bell (Cambridge: Cambride University Press, 1999), 173. Regarding human rights and equality, she states, "It is grounded in the *Qur'anic* notion of a common human ontology (*fitna*) and couched in an Islamic idiom of moral universalism that predates much of Western discourses about human rights. It is thus doctrinally part of the *Qur'anic* worldview itself."

[413] Ihya' 'ulum al-din, *Al-Ghazālī Website*, www.al-ghazali.org.

This Dissertation's Contribution to Christian Apologetics

Christian apologetics can be categorized into the three major categories of two-step, one-step, and presuppositionalism. In these three broad categories, inductive, deductive, and abductive arguments are used. The classical model of apologetics will often build its argument around a number of deductive arguments, whose conclusions follow necessariliy from the premises. Deductive arguments include the cosmological argument, the ontological argument, teleological argument, and the moral argument. Inductive argumentation can be used to support these deductive arguments' premises. For instance, through inductive accumulation of data about the cosmos, the premise in the deductive teleological argument that the cosmos is finely tuned can be reasonably held and justified. The abductive argument uses data, and the more certain the data the more reliable the argument. Furthermore, these data are set against other known background knowledge — this knowledge is relative to the inquiry. It is the theory used to account for this data without doing violence to background knowledge that strengthens this theory as the "best explanation." It has become fashionable and useful in apologetics to appropriate a cumulative case apologetic. Instead of just using one strand of argumentation — for instance, rational deductive, inductive evidential, or historical abductive — the apologist will use all of these in an attempt to win the day by a *tours de force*. The argument used in this dissertation, *the abductive argument from human relationships*, can become part of a cumulative case apologetic.

First, how this argument was designed and used in the dissertation is honorable to Scripture. Genesis 1:26 – 28 and 2:24 demand careful consideration of humanity communally conceived as God's supreme analogy. The entire enterprise of anthropology must be brought under the scrutizing and judgmental light of God's revelatory voice (i.e., Scripture). If humanity

is to be considered in terms of a male and female in sexual union, then isolate and autonomous models of anthropology are judged guilty by the court of God's Word. Indeed, autonomous humans, ruggedly individualistic, could well be both a fictive reality impossible to achieve but desparately attempted and a sinful continuation of the alienation that separates both God from humanity and man from man.[414] The more fragmented humanity becomes the more dimunition of what humanity is designed to be.

Second, the *abductive argument from human relationships* adds another argument in a two-step apologetic. To review, two-step is where the apologist first establishes the likelihood of theism (1st step), then he gives a second set of arguments to demonstrate that Christian theism is the most likely out of the theistic options (2nd step). The most common and often persuasive argument in the 2nd step is the argument of the historicity of Jesus' resurrection. It is, also, an abductive argument, taking the data and, then, inferring to the best explanation of that data against the known background knowledge. The *abductive argument from human relationships* can add another argument to the 2nd step that not only supports Christian theism but Trinitarian Christian theism. The only imagined competitor that the Trinity has towards explaining human reality in a comparable manner may be some form of polytheism. Although I cannot explore this now, the biological union (*ousia*-like), that is, biological entailments every child has of his parents, appears to be inimical to an ultimacy that would be demanded by a plurality (or diversity in separateness) of gods. The *abductive argument from human relationships* can be repackaged to meet challenges of other worldviews.

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[414] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*, 2. Zizioulas identifies a core of sin, if not the core, to be rejection of the other, first in Adam rejection of God, then subsequently in the continual rejection of one human by another.

It cannot be insignificant that God created Adam with Eve within him. This way of thinking about it might be a bit odd, so thinking about it as God knowing that He would create Eve by using part of Adam might be better. Procreation is all the more telling because of how one person dwells within another person in the process of conception and carrying a new human life to term. Surely, the case can be made that becoming *ᵉḥad* flesh (one flesh) speaks to both intercourse and the literal biological union of human genes in a new fleshly one (a child). Procreational-human-reality, chosen by God as His analogy (esp. Gen. 2:24), more than subtely suggests a Trinitarian theism. The Christian apologist should not balk at the rich use of Christian resources as playing unfairly on home turf. Every worldview has to generate explanations of reality according to its view of things. That Christianity in its unique view of God as Trinity would have such a powerful explanatory thesis on the dimensionality of human reality speaks to the Christian worldview's sufficiency. The question for Christianity's opponents is, do they? In this dissertation, it has been demonstrated that the worldview of Islam cannot explain human reality to near the degree that Christianity is capable. This is not to say that the day is won for Christianity, but it is to say that so long as this *abductive argument from human relationships contra Islam* can reasonably be defended, at least one battle rages on towards victory.

Every person experiences his reality as being in oneness to others, distinct from others, and related to others. As noted well earlier in this paper, it is the undeniability of these evidences that emboldens the *abductive argument from human relationships*. Unless someone embraces non-realism, it is hard to imagine that any of these three can be escaped. Modern science has made biological oneness all but certain. Cognitive union is expressed in one degree or another in every informative engagement — whether with the newspaper, internet, or conversation. That we are distinct from one another is so obvious it is hard to even argue for this. What is more

claryoiant than this, even as someone reads this as distinct from me? That all stand in relationships is something impossible to escape by just existing. The concrete occurance of one person in another person in a woman's pregnancy is well explained by the Trinity in terms of *perichōrēsis*, one *Hypostasis* (Person) in the other *Hypostseis* (Persons). Does any other worldview have as an explanatory thesis for the procreational reality of humanity as does Trinitarian Christian theism? If it is allowed that demonic possession is real, then not only is there a concrete human example of one person in another, but there is also a spiritual reality of one spiritual entity (demon) occupying the same space as another spiritual entity (the human possessed). There may be other worldviews that can compete; this is an inevitiability as long as people care about the cogency of their worldview. Time will tell if any other worldview can give the type of explanation that God the Trintiy is capable of doing towards these human realities — oneness, distinctness, and relatedness.

Ongoing Research

Powerful questions about how metaphysics/ontology influences or coordinates with anthropology certainly come out of this study. Every worldview has to account for human phenomena, which includes the ability of how to even ask the questions of anthropology. For instance, anthropologists know well that being human raises the question of "ensoulment," but this question is only raised with a certain metaphysical or ontological horizon.[415] If a philosophical naturalist or a materialist are asking the questions of what being human means, it would be strange for "ensoulment" to be included, at least so long as "soul" is taken in the traditional Judaic or platonic notion. How the theological horizon of the Trinity or Allah's

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[415] Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, rep. (1971; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), chap. 10, sec. 1. Kindle. "Horizons then are the sweep of our interests and of our knowledge; they are the fertile source of further knowledge and care; but they also are the boundaries that limit our capacities for assimilating more than we already have attained."

ontology coordinates (or not), explains, and grounds anthropology has been considerably

analyzed herein. There is nevertheless much remaining work in what it means to be human in

view of the Deity. There must be two movements in inquires into the Deity-man relationship.

One movement is anaphatic or "from above," and the second movement is cataphatic or "from

below." First, what is humanity expected to look like in the case of this Deity (or that Deity)?

Second, humans understand what it means to be human by their cognitive faculties and

experiential realities, so what sort of Deity is expected from this cognitive and experiential data?

It is the movement between the two data sets (theology and anthropology) that will continue to

enrich both disciplines.[416] This question is as important for Christians' dialogue with Muslims as

with secular naturalists. The "dimensionalities" of what it means to be human based on any

survey of humanity now or past includes a desire for transcendence. This has been spoken of in

the anthropological categories by the terms of openness and exocentricity. Christians and

Muslims both should continue to develop respective anthropologies along side those of secular

humanism. The stark comparison between theistic anthropology and secular anthropology will

blaze transparent by this side-by-side comparison. Modern Christianity has significant resources

for this task, especially if pulling from historical theology and writings on the *Imagō Deī*.

Modern Islam has few (at least readily available in English), but Islam does have historic

resources. The attribute of dissimilarity, predicated of Allah, precludes modern Muslims from

even an initiation of such inquiry. Muslims, however, need not settle for the prohibition against

anthropomorphizing; they have, after all, Al-Ghazālī to rally behind because, as observed

formerly, he did argue for the use and legitimacy of analogical interpretation.

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[416] That anthropology helps to formulate theology may sound risky or idolatrous. Christianity holds that man is made in God's image. It follows that the clearer man understands himself in view of the fact that he was created in God's image, the clearer certain aspects of who and what God is will become to man. God reveals Himself and reveals what man is in Scripture, but the human experience of day-in-day-out life is a precondition of understanding Scripture, which means that the human experience helps in the task of theological understanding.

Analogical predication of human reality to God has long occurred in Christianity, and, as a result, it is recognized that in each anthropomorphism there is theomorphism as well. This is a natural outgrowth of relating the semiotic realities of lingual ration to the ontological reality of God and humans. Every analogy (ligual-semiotic) contains an equivocal aspect and a univocal aspect; therefore, humans and God (ontological realities) are dissimilar and similar. The similarities owe to God's coordinating humanity to "look like" Him, and the dissimilarities arise from humanity's true contingency. Strictly speaking, humans represent God; God does not represent humans. The unoriginate God is ever presencing, so He is not re-presenting anything; everything else represents Him, and humans do so in particularly holistic ways. As a consequence, for every anthropomorphism, there should always be the paratactic package of theomorphism-anthromophism. Every anthropmorphism always contains a theomorphic aspect and an anthropomorphic aspect. In this regard, anthropomorphisms are convertible with theomorphisms. Whether using the term "anthropomorphism" or "theomorphism," both the anthropomorphic and the theomorphic aspects are contained in the reality being spoken of. To speak, for instance, of the hand of God is to speak theomorphically or anthropomorphically depending on which aspect is under analysis; the focus on one or the other, however, is only isolating one or the other for the purposes of thought because the occurrence of a human "hand" being predicated of God is to speak theomorphically-anthropomorphically. The theomorphism should always be arranged first in the construction of "theomorphism-anthropomorphism" so that this syntax presents the causal reality that anthropomorphism (form of man) depends upon and so comes after theomorphism (form of God). Said differently, the theomorphic aspect in every anthropomorphism presents the univocal likeness between God and humanity while the anthropomorphic aspect contains the interval of analogical extension.

Why it has become fashionable in most discussions in biblical theology to find in Scripture only anthropomorphisms, and to speak with this term, is vexing. The importance of anthropomorphisms is their function in mediating content-full data about God. Where, then, is the language of theomorphisms? There is a very real question here about the influence of secularism in all domains of the academy and popular writing, whether evangelical or otherwise. The gaging of the theomorphic emphases in anthropomorphisms needs unsilenced. This question is as important for general revelation expressed through humanity as it is for special revelation in Scripture. Scripture includes human influence by God's choice to communicate through humans without turning them into automatons — dictation theories in Christianity are all but abandoned for good reasons. This means that it is accurate to speak of an anthropomorphic aspect even in God' revealing of Himself; He does not drop the Bible out of the sky. Indeed, in the only account of all Scripture where God writes something Himself, He still does so on a tablet in semiotic forms Moses and the Israelites could understand (Exod. 31:18). In other words, He communicated anthropomorphically. Then, there is Jesus Christ. God's premeire revelation and exegesis of Himself (Jesus) occurs through a person who, according to Nicene orthodoxy, was fully man. Evangelicals must wake from their docetic slumbers; and liberal Christianity needs to stir from their Samosataian nightmares.[417] The enchanting spell Hume and Kant cast on modern man is waning in its power; a robust presentation of analogical predication's theomorphic emphasis can be a reconnection of the immanent with the transcendent.[418] That there are theomorphic aspects and anthropomorphic aspects must be equally emphasized in theories of

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[417] Paul of Samosata is known for his teaching in the third century (C.E.) of Jesus' mere "man-ness," sometimes refered to as Monarchianism.

[418] The reconnection would be in man's thinking (epistemology), not in the ontological reality.

analogical interpretation to model what has occurred in God's self movement of revealing Himself.

Islam faces the terrible conclusion that maintaining Allah's utter dissimilarity to creation is agnosticism. There is certainly more than one voice among Muslims themselves in this regard, but the distancing of Allah from creation is the general trend. It is understandable that there is more than one interpretation on difficult matters of theology. The issue at hand, however, is not with multiple interpretations, but with the viability of Islam as a distinct tradition apart from agnosticism. To put it differently, the theological task can only begin with knowledge of Allah; if there is no way of knowing Allah, then there is no theology of Allah either, not because the theology is not there (ontology), but because humanity has no access to it (epistemology). There are other matters of Islamic theology that need clarification so as to remove what appear to be contradictions. *The Cambridge Companion of Classical Islamic Theology*, used regularly throughout this treatise, is a wonderful source for articulating the difficulties and the complexities Islamic theology has faced. The task that falls to Muslims today is to elucidate these matters. This will include political maneuvers as much as religious sensitivities for Muslims. Under the traditionalist emphasis that innovation (or explanation) is bad, Muslim theologians must not only deal with the arguments and theology, but with the religious communities' disposition on such theologizing. This is further complicated by the fact that religious community and government are interpenetrating realities in much of the Islamic world. As a Christian who applauds the great richness of historical Islamic theology, I, for one, am eager to see what Muslims can produce today. Seyyed Hossein Nasr is a prominent and impressive scholar, and he acts as a contemporary example of Muslim excellence in theology and philosophy. The faithfulness to "reasoning logically" that Al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymīyya

demonstrated can act as guide for modern Muslims to help resolve these matters. Their writings are available and could be mined for their richness, and then modern Muslim theologians could put these gems to work in Muslim religious thought. To return to the major concern, utter dissimilarity between Allah and creation places an impenetrable divide where Muslims are locked into only knowing things in the world while Allah at His transcendent distance is never reachable, which means He is not knowable either. Does affirming with Surah 112 that there "is none like unto Him" require full out apophaticism? The answer lies in the meaning of the word "like." If, on the one hand, it means that nothing is exactly like the Deity, then analogical predication is possible, as Al-Ghazālī taught. If, on the other hand, it means that nothing is like the Deity in any way, then analogical is impossible and agnosticism's haunting moans will drown out the calls of the minaret.

Some may attempt to note the similarities between Islam and Christianity in the practical experience of mysticism. They are only largely similar, though, if the particular form of Christianity is totally apophatic in its theological method. Otherwise, Christianity affirms and can reasonably defend positive knowledge of God: this type of theology would be both apophatic and cataphatic. A mystical experience can be set against what is positively known about God to judge the truthfulness and validity of such an experience. Islam's theological method, it is claimed, is apophatic; Allah is only known by what He is not. Mysticism on total apophatic theology will still only leave the Muslim with agnosticism because there is no positive knowledge of Allah by which to adjudicate if the mystical experience is truly an experiencing of Allah or some other spiritual entity. The same would hold true for forms of Christianity that are totally apophatic in their theological methodology. At this point, mystics of either Christianity or Islam may still assert that they know because they have had the "immediate access" or "sight" of

the Deity and there is no question to the experiencer. The truth of their claims may be veridical, but appeals to subjective experience without any other corroboration cannot be communicated, failing to convince others in the process. The matter is further complicated by the fact that mystical descriptions are ambiguous, as reading differing accounts shows, especially if one reads accounts from different cultures and religions.[419] The question is held out if one's mystical experience ever really coordinates with someone else's mystical experience so that they might corroborate one anothers' experiences. Can the ambiguity entailed in describing such experiences be overcome? A mystical experience that becomes an overriding belief for a particular worldview against claims to the contrary might suffice for *that* person's ongoing faith. The articulation of the mystical experience will continually face the problem of incommunicability, and, so long that it does, fail to convince those who are not fideistically ready to jump on board.

Islamic anthropology is currently developing by Muslims themselves rather than by Western eyes. A major category used in anthropological studies is "intersubjectivity." Describing anthropology in Islamic cultures faces little problem if done from a naturalistic or materialistic set of presuppositions. The theological or Qur'anic questions will not be asked in an anthropology that is descriptive of Islamic persons (persons in an Islamic culture) that supposes the world is nothing more than the natural realm. Muslims will have problems with this since the *Din* requires the knowledge of Allah to be spread across the world.[420] When anthropological questions are asked of the theology of Allah or of the revelatory content in the Qur'an, a number

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[419] Jerome Gellman, "Mysticism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (The Metaphysics Research Lab, 2014), accessed June 26, 2014, plato.stanford.edu/entries/mysticism/.

[420] Nasr, *Islamic Life*, 7. E.g., the first thing Nasr does in this little book on Islamic civilization is note that "there [is not] in Islam the distinction between the religious and secular, or the sacred and the profane, as there is in Christianity.

of challenges arise. Can the Qur'an account for the nature of human reality, or does the Qur'an just discuss how to act in community without explaining why humanity's ontology subsists in this communal way? Does this mean that the framework of humanity's ontology is arbitrary? If arbitrary, why does humanity have so many qualities similar to Allah like volition, understanding, reasoning, and moral apprehension? The biggest problem is that the Qur'an is the Speech of just One. Why does community exist? How can Islam explain intersubjectivity? Is the anthropological task an exercise in obfuscation based on the bent towards understanding creation as illusory? Can the multiplicity of persons ever be resolved in view of *Tawḥīdic* Allah, or is this just the intractable problem of the one and the many once again? There are plenty of directions that need explored.

The most dangerous question dealt with the Qur'an as other than Allah. It is claimed that the Qur'an is Allah's Speech, but it is Speech primarily about guiding humanity, not about revealing the nature or properties of Allah. If the Qur'an is not representative or identifiable with the nature or properties of Allah, then who or what should it be identified with? If not identifiable with Allah, how is it retractable to Allah in order to protect the doctrine of *Tawḥīd*?[421] A potential way of answering this is to say that humanity has been eternally in the mind of Allah, which means that the Qur'an as Allah's Speech has forever been in this role of guidance and dialogue with humanity. This might create more problems than solutions. Immediately, there is the awkward supposition that the Qur'an is addressing Allah in terms of guidance towards the objects of Allah's mind, humans. These humans, however, do not exist at this point, so is the Qur'an addressing and dialoguing with Allah? Of course, even asking the question this way conjures the spector of *shirk*. *Tawḥīd* requires utter simplicity so that the

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[421] Khalid, Blankinship, "The Early Creed," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 51 – 52.

Qur'an cannot be said to "address" Allah since this supposes distinction between the Two, and this starts to appear much like the Father and His *Logos* of Christianity. The underlying tension comes from the fact that the Qur'an is eternal, but those addressed by the Qur'an are not. Taking *Tawḥīd* seriously will require thinking of the Qur'an as simply Allah speaking. Does Allah, therefore, speak to Himself forever in the past in terms of giving directives and commands to humans yet to exist? Why would He forever speak this way to creatures who do not exist forever? This is strange and it seems oddly inefficient. If Muslims could unpack this for the rest of us, it would go a long way towards Islam's coherency. This will require the use of both theology and philosophical reasoning, so time will tell if the ancient bias against philosophy will hold out.

Further work needs done on how to understand Islam's stance on revelation in comparison with Christianity's doctrine of the same. It is frequently packaged with Christianity and Judaism as a revelatory religion of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The revelatory expression in Islam will have to differ considerably from Christianity and Judaism because of Islam's departure from the *Imagō Deī*.[422] Islam is revelatory; there is no doubt of this, but the purpose of revelation in Islam is not properly about the Deity's self-giving, like in Christianity (and Old Testament Judaism). Throughout this work, the abandonment or upholding of the similarity (analogy) between the Deity and man has played a major role in what to make of humanity. The ramifications were demonstrable within this study because Christians use the analogy while some Muslims *try* to deny it. The point needs to be pressed that Islam cannot escape understanding Allah through understanding humanity and human reality. To say that

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[422] Yahya Michot, "Revelation," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 180 – 182. Revelation in Islam is less about ontology and more about religion. Michot means by this that it is the ethical dimension Allah rules over that is the main concern. Muslim thought akin to Nasr, however, will find everything to be about expressing God. Nasr, *Islamic Life*, 7 – 9.

"Allah wills it" will be ambiguous unless this speaker first knows what it means to say that "man wills it." The continuation of such a denial counts against both Islam's coherency and cogency. In view of this study, categorizing Islam as a religion of revelation may stand, but it should not stand together with Christianity (and maybe Judaism as well, depending on the type or time). Christianity takes all creation, man, Scripture, and especially Jesus Christ as God's self-revealing and communicating Himself to man, not that each revelatory component listed does so in the same magnitude. Some Islamic positions deny the similarity between Allah and man, creation and man, and maintain that the Qur'an (Scripture) is mainly about Allah directing humanity, not revealing Allah. On Islam's model of revelation, it is not a surprise that Muslims are far more apophatic in their religious thinking than Christians. Another groundbreaking work like Avery Dulles *Models of Revelation* would go a long way towards distinguishing the rightful similarities and dissimilarities between Christianity's view of revelation and Islam's view. The groundwork for revelation respective to each religion has been done. It only remains to set the two side-by-side in a rich, comparative manner. The need is great both because of reductionism that pluralists can impose and to make plain the real differences in their doctrines of revelation along with the ramifications.[423]

From this study, the Deity-world relationship stands prominent. Christianity has long held to the stance that creation/world is contingent, both from scriptural semantic reasons (e.g., בָּרָא Gen. 1:1) and theological reflections (e.g., holiness as separateness). This does not mean that there has not been any deviance, but the ongoing centrality of *ex nihilo* is not in doubt —

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[423] John Hick, "Islam and Christianity," A lecture to the Iranian Institute of Philosophy, under the auspices of the Iranian Institute for Interreligious Dialogue in Tehran, March 2005, accessed June 26, 2014: www.johnhick.org.uk/article12.html. This acts as one example because Hick begins by mentioning the similarities, starting with the fact that both religions are religions of revelations. He mentions the importance of Jesus Christ for Christianity's identity, but he does not tie this to revelation.

creation is out of nothing, not out of God or the ground of divine being. Islam needs a centralizing epicenter similar to this on its doctrine of creation. That Islam is reported to maintain multiple doctrines of creation does not speak well of *Tawḥīd*. If there is only one Deity, why is there multiple ways to take how creation came about? From this study, Islam's dotrine on creation placed creation as illusory in the dominant position. If creation is taken this way in Islam, work needs done to show how *shirk* is viable when creation is illusory. The preeminence Allah is given in Islam's attempts to keep Him utterly separate — although not succeeding as much as would be liked — which accords importance to the doctrine of creation as contingent. Really, then, Islam needs to construct a clear, cogent, and defensible doctrine of creation as contingent. Fideisitically affirming creation as contingent is not going to satisfy the minds of true seekers, like Al-Ghazālī.[424] The great thinkers of Islam interrogated in this work, however, usually took creation as illusory. As noted by Ayman Shilhadeh, Ibn Taymīyya may have even allowed the idea of creation as eternal to be considered.[425] Why is Islam's doctrine of creation so confused? This needs cleared up.

The binitarian nature of Islam must be emphasized as a means to conversation between Christians and Muslims.[426] It seems that Muslims really are *de facto* binitarian monotheists, but formally they claim to be unitary monotheists. The Qur'an as other is problematic for Muslims because the Qur'an begins to look associated with Allah (*shirk*), but this difficulty may be a bridge between Islam and Christianity. What the Qur'an is to Isalm as Allah's Speech is what

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[424] Al Ghazālī, *Al-Ghazali's Path to Sufism: his Deliverance from Error*, 19. – 20 Al-Ghazālī speaks disdainfully about conformism and beliefs that have not been tested.

[425] Ayman Shihadeh, "The Existence of God," in *Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic*, 206. It stands, however, that if Ibn Taymīyya thought that the world was illusory (who knows if he did in the account Shihadeh cites), it could be considered eternal because this would really be affirming the eternality of Allah.

[426] Apparently the matra used to avoid having to face the question of the relationship between the Qur'an and Allah is "It [the Qur'an] is neither Allah nor other than Him."

Christ is to Christianity as God's Word (not a 1:1 comparison though). For Muslims to demonstrate that they are not binitarian monotheists will require them to clarify how the Qur'an is retractable to Allah's pure *Tawḥīdic* nature. As argued many times throughout this dissertation, doing this will be hard because of the dialogical character of the Qur'an with humans. How can what is eternal (Qur'an) have an eternal dialogue with what is not eternal (humans)? Why does the Qur'an prescribe a communal way of life for humans that is so contrary to Allah's way of life as alone? These are just a few example matters that would need to be illuminated. Otherwise, Christians can discuss and address the nature of the Qur'an as Allah's Speech, and, in this sense, as Allah's ration inasmuch as speech is always accompanied with ration. To speak of the Qur'an in this way as a distinct eternal reality from Allah is similar to speaking of the *Logos* as a distinct eternal reality from the Father. Although this is not a one to one comparison, the similarities are striking. The issue should be pressed until the Qur'an is admitted to be distinct from Allah or one with Allah. If the Qur'an is ultimately distinct from Allah, then why the Qur'an is allowed to be distinct while the Son, Christ, in Christianity's doctrine is not must be asked. This is a missional and reasonable dialogue. It is reasonable because double standards should make anyone uncomfortable. It is missional because Muslims should know how very close their belief in the Qur'an as a distinct eternal reality is to the Christian doctrine of Christ as the *Logos* of the Father.

There is need for more research on how Islam can or could maintain "distinction" before creation. Not only does distinction need substantiated but also personal distinction. Suggestions of "distinctions" in the mind of Allah threaten *Tawḥīd*. Moreover, Allah's personal distinction, whether it is argued that distinctions are in the mind of Allah or not, resides in and depends on the coming of other personal beings, namely, humans. Thus, Allah's personal distinctness from

humans will always act to make Allah similar to humans in the personal distinctness they introduce when they are created. Sufis discomfort with dualism, in view of this, is justified. How can undifferentiated Oneness (Allah) produce multiplicity in the first place? This question might very well be the hardest to overcome.

The semantic issues need much attention both in the potential of Muslims resolving them and in Christian apologists polemic against Islam. First, how can Allah's oneness be affirmed? If all creation has no evidence of the type of oneness Allah is said to have, that is, a oneness apart from all other things that is truly alone, how does a Muslim go about the affirmation? Furthermore, if all examples of oneness in creation are dissimilar to Allah in Allah's pure lone oneness, is affirmation of such oneness by a human idolatrous? If Allah is utterly dissimilar to creation, then any affirmation of Allah's *Tawḥīd* will not be worthy of Him. Should Muslims stop their affirmation, then, since the affirmation is just a vacuous statement? Why is "otherness" allowed to be predicated of Allah by Muslims? The "one-and-another" paradigm is developed and framed by the coming of creatures. How is this creaturely framework allowed to be applied to Allah? Is this not anthropomorphizing? The point of all this is that "one-and-anotherness" is not framed in Allah Himself, so where does it come from?[427] Muslims could just fall back on Allah's transcendence, appealing to the mysticism entailed. This, however, will count against Islam's coherency and cogency in conversations about comparative religion. The human desire for explanation and understanding is not a Western cultural phenomena, as Al-Ghazālī, Ibn Taymīyya, and Ibn ʿArabī make manifest. So long as humans develop systems of understanding

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[427] Zizioulas, "Otherness and the Being of God," in *Communion and Otherness*. Although much of Zizioulas' book deals with how "otherness" can be given ontological priority to the same degree as "being/substance," this section along with chapter three are particularly salient.

(e.g., mythos), Islam as a religion will need to justify its use of language and how such language is viable.

There is a new opportunity both in Europe and in the United States of America in the early twenty-first century to converse, confront, and differentiate what Christianity has to offer from what secularism has to offer. Posing the situation this way is a generalization; still, the battle of these times in Western developed countries is largely between secular humanism and the Christianity's continuing cultural influence. The former is composed of naturalistic, scientific, materialistic, and neo-religious ingredients; the latter may no longer be explicitly practiced or even relevant to many Westerners, but the values and laws in many Western countries reflect Christianity in the cultural infrastructure. This situation provides a constrast where many enjoy this Christian infrastructure — not that all of it is from Christianity — while holding Christianity as passé, contemptuous, or of little importance. To this attitude, where it exists in individual persons, Christians can say, "This is how Christians think of man and why, so how do you and why?" Anthropology is a major discipline in secular universities, and Christianity has a unique way to handle the question of man. John Zizioulas has settled the matter on whether contemporary Christianity's view of God as Trinity can handle both otherness and communion as equally ontologically weighty.[428] Thus, the contemporary question of man and why it is the case that man experiences life as otherness and community has been answered based on God as Trinity. Human intersubjectivity is explained by God's intrasubjectivity. Christian anthropology goes farther in answering this reality than anything that can be offered from any other worldview. This sounds like an overstatement, but anyone who has considered rightly the radical uniqueness of God as Trinity knows that this incredible theology will have

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[428] Zizioulas, *Communion & Otherness*.

resources no other craft, worldview, or ontology may possess. The question of the one and the many has overcome many would-be answers to it, but God the Trinity illuminates the problem and demonstrates that the very question of the one and the many is a fictive and idolatrous way of thinking about the God-world relationship. Christian anthropology has this rich backdrop for its development; it should craft its viewpoint and propagate it as an alternative to secular humanist anthropology. The resources of God the Trinity are truly invaluable. Christians aligned with Nicene-Constantinopolitan orthodoxy are Trinitarian, and it is high time to think in accord with this rather than thinking about God like a Muslim would.

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