

The Concept of Shema Yisrael and Tawhid al-Kitab as Religious Constructs and their Influence on Christian and Muslim Understanding of God, Mission, and Relation with People of Other Faiths

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Abstract

The study is designed to assess the interplay of philosophical, theological and religious factors that have influenced the discussion on both Christian and Muslim concepts of Monotheism as conceptualised in the Shema Yishrael and Tawhid al-Kitab, how it affects and influences Christian and Muslim understanding of God, Mission and relation with people of other faiths. The study examines the discourse of Christian and Muslim scholars and corpus to decipher the extent of influence and tolerance regarding views and expressions that are dissimilar to the uncompromising concepts of understanding derived from the doctrines of the shemah and tawhid in Christianity and Islam.

Keywords: Christianity, Islam, Shema, Tawhid, Exclusivism, Tolerance,

Introduction

Polemics, and prejudices motivating polarizations and antagonisms in Christian and Muslim encounters across the globe have raised major concerns the world over. Although, the

root causes of many of these have been political, rather than religious, religion has often been used as a tool to express and manipulate sentiments and legitimize the political and social agenda of selfish tyrants and greedy individuals.⁴⁸ According to the *Encyclopaedia of Wars*⁴⁹, out of all 1,763 known/recorded historical conflicts, 123, or 6.98%, had religion as their primary cause. Matthew White's⁵⁰ *The Great Big Book of Horrible Things* gives religion as the cause of 11 of the world's 100 deadliest atrocities.

In several conflicts including the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, the Syrian civil war, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, religious elements are overtly present but variously described as fundamentalism or extremism. However, studies on these cases often reveals that ethnic animosities drive much of the conflicts.⁵¹ According to Jeffrey Burton Russell, numerous cases of supposed acts of religious wars such as the Thirty Years' War, the French Wars of Religion, the Sri Lankan Civil War, 9/11 and other terrorist attacks, the Bosnian War, and the Rwandan Civil War were all primarily motivated by social, political, and economic issues rather than religion.⁵²

It is difficult to imagine a time in history at which there is greater need for a revision of the approach to scriptural interpretation and interfaith/interreligious engagement than

⁴⁸ Michel, T, "Social and religious factors affecting Muslim-Christian relations." *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* (1997); Willem, A.B., "Christian Muslim Relations: a burdensome past, a challenging Future", *Word & World* Volume XVI, Number 2. (1996).

⁴⁹ Axelrod, Alan; Phillips, Charles, eds. (2004). *Encyclopaedia of Wars* (Vol.3). Facts on File. pp. 1484-1485 Index entry for Religious wars category;

⁵⁰ Matthew White *The Great Big Book of Horrible Things*. W.W. Norton & Company. (2011).. 544; Andrew Holt, Ph.D. *Religion and the 100 Worst Atrocities in History*. <https://apholt.com/2018/11/08/religion-and-the-100-worst-atrocities-in-history/>

⁵¹ Omar, Irfan; Duffey, Michael (eds.). "Introduction". *Peacemaking and the Challenge of Violence in World Religions*. Wiley-Blackwell. p. 1

⁵² Russell, Jeffrey Burton. *Exposing Myths about Christianity*. Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books. (2012) 56

now. There are estimated 9 billion people in the world, 32% are said to be Christian, 23% Muslim, 15% Hindu, 7% Buddhist, and 0.2% Jewish, 157 countries have a majority Christian population, while 49 have a majority Muslim population. Together Christians and Muslims make up 55% approximately 4.5 billion people. Therefore, failure to live in peace with one another, collaborate on issues of common concerns and endeavour to create an atmosphere of tolerance, peaceful coexistence and mutual respect consequently would result in negative repercussion on world peace and stability.

History is bedecked with shameful acts of religious hostilities, rivalries and clashes. Many lives have been lost and millions of properties destroyed. People have been displaced and vast lands made desolate. The absence of an encompassing interpretive praxis regarding the tenets of religious beliefs and practices of Christians and Muslims to encourage peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and tolerance for the other continue to create hostility, suspicion and rivalry giving opportunity to power drunk political scavengers to capitalize on the cleavage to perpetuate their selfish agenda. Since the emergence of a vigorous and growing Muslim community in the Arabian Peninsula in early 7th century, Christians and Muslims have been forced to negotiate the realities of face-to-face interactions, and in all-too-common violent conflicts.⁵³

Under the banner of the Cross, medieval crusaders slaughtered thousands of Muslims. They justified their actions in part to a response to Islamic aggression against Christians in the East.⁵⁴ During the 14th and 15th centuries, Mongol warlord Timur and his armies left heaps of skulls across Asia as a symbol of grisly

⁵³ Robinson, Chase F. "Introduction / The rise of Islam, 600 705". In Robinson, Chase F. (ed.). *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Volume 1: The Formation of the Islamic World, Sixth to Eleventh Centuries.* Cambridge University Press. (2010). 1–15, 173–225.

⁵⁴ M.D, Andrew G. Bostom *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims.* Prometheus Books. (2010). 34.

ventures in the cause of Holy War.⁵⁵ It is important that Muslims and Christians endeavour to develop a methodology of interpretation of scripture and religious text that is compatible and commensurate with the present social, cultural and political circumstances within which they find themselves. The challenge therefore for such an enterprise amidst changing social, political, economic and religious demographics are not only procedural, they are imperative.

Hick,⁵⁶ indicates that theological formulations are the discourse of people living in a certain place at a certain time, subject to particular historical exigencies, and using the philosophical and linguistic tools available to them within their own culture. As such, their suppositions are provisional and reformable. Despite the hostile impression of Christian and Muslim encounters in the past, as adherents interact with each other in each particular generation, they come to grips with the limits of their doctrinal suppositions and recognise that their religious views are largely shaped by imposed circumstantial apprehensions of previous generations.⁵⁷

The concept of Shema Yishrael and Tawhid al-Kitab

The Shema Yishrael and Tawhid al-Kitaab are both considered the most defining and fundamental definition of Judeo-Christian and Muslim beliefs. As religious constructs, they define both the extent and limit of religious faith expressions beyond which a person is considered a heretic or an apostate. They indicate the explicit display of the uncompromising monotheism of both Christianity and Islam.

⁵⁵ J. Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, Pa. (1997)

⁵⁶ Hick J., "Islam and Christian Monotheism", in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (Ed.). *Islam in a World of Diverse Faiths*. New York: St Martin's Press, (1997)

⁵⁷ Eck, D. L., "Dialogue and Method: Reconstructing the Study of Religion" in *A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age*, (Ed) Kimberley C. Patton and Benjamin C. Ray, Berkeley: University of California Press (2000).

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates Deut 6:4-9 NIV

The statement is the basic confession of faith and brief summary of the Judeo-Christian religion, containing the first principles of faith and obedience. The *Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad* are the first words of the Jewish prayer. It is a declaration of faith and a pledge of allegiance to God. It is a mitzvah for the Jewish people. In the book of Deuteronomy 6:4-9, God dictates that it be contained in the mezuzah⁵⁸ or phylacteries⁵⁹. The doctrine is that, the Lord, who was the covenant God and Father of his people Israel, is but one God; he is YHWH, self-existent, eternal and immutable.⁶⁰ This

⁵⁸ *Mezuzah*, also spelled Mezuzah (Hebrew: “doorpost”), plural Mezuzoth, Mezuzot, Mezuzahs, or Mezuzas, small folded or rolled parchment inscribed by a qualified calligraphist with scriptural verses (Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21) to remind Jews of their obligations toward God. The parchment is placed in a metal, wooden, or glass case so that the word Shaddai (“Almighty”) can usually be seen on the back of the parchment. After a special blessing is recited, the mezuzah is firmly fixed to the main doorpost of the home (to the right as one enters). It is a custom with some Jews to kiss the mezuzah as they pass it. The wearing of a mezuzah on a chain around the neck is a practice of relatively recent origin.

⁵⁹ Phylactery, Hebrew *tefillin*, also spelled *tephillin* or *tfillin*, in Jewish religious practice, one of two small black leather cube-shaped cases containing Torah texts written on parchment, which, in accordance with Deuteronomy 6:8 (and similar statements in Deuteronomy 11:18 and Exodus 13:9, 16), are to be worn by male Jews 13 years of age and older as reminders of God and of the obligation to keep the Law during daily life. The name phylactery is derived from the Greek *phylakterion*, meaning amulet.

⁶⁰ Deut 4:6 KJV

appears from the perfection of his nature, omnipotence, and omnipresence; for there can be but one eternal, one omnipotent, and one omnipresent which also is concluded from his being the first cause of all things, and from his relations to his creatures, as their King, ruler, governor, and lawgiver.⁶¹

Not only did such expression require reverence and obedience, they demanded those it was handed over to, to ensure that, their children and children's children were made to know, accept and hold them in same esteem. They are told, 'Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates', Deut 11:19-21 NRSV.

Christianity and Islam are considered Abrahamic.⁶² Christianity begins with the foretelling of the birth of Jesus the main actor of Christianity by the Angel Gabriel to the young Virgin Mary. The story continues with his life, ministry, crucifixion and resurrection. The core beliefs are summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. (a) Jesus died for our sins, (b) was buried, (c) was resurrected, and (d) thereby offers salvation to all who will receive Him in faith. Beyond these core beliefs are many others indicative of what Christianity is and what Christians believe. Christians believe that the Bible is inspired,

⁶¹ Aaron, David H Etched in Stone: The Emergence of the Decalogue. Continuum; Abdrushin (2009). The Ten Commandments of God and the Lord's Prayer. Grail Foundation Press; Markl, Dominik (2012): "The Decalogue in History: A Preliminary Survey of the Fields and Genres of its Reception", in: Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte – vol. 18, n°. (2006). 279–293

⁶² The Abrahamic religions, also referred to collectively as **Abrahamism**, are a group of Semitic-originated religious communities of faith that claim descent from the Judaism of the ancient Israelites and the worship of the God of Abraham. The Abrahamic religions are monotheistic, with the term deriving from the patriarch Abraham (a major biblical figure from the Old Testament, who is recognized by Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others)

“God-breathed” (Word of God) and that its teaching is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice.⁶³

Christians believe in one God that exists in three persons⁶⁴ - Father, Son (Jesus Christ), and Holy Spirit. Christians believe that humanity was created specifically to have a relationship with God, but sin separates all men from God (Romans 3:23; 5:12). Christianity teaches that Jesus Christ walked this earth, fully God, and yet fully Man (Philippians 2:6-11), and died on the cross. Christians believe that after His death, Christ was buried, He rose again, and now lives at the right hand of the Father, making intercession for the believers forever (Hebrews 7:25). Christianity proclaims that Jesus’ death on the cross was sufficient to completely pay the sin debt owed by all men and this is what restores the broken relationship between God and man (Hebrews 9:11-14; 10:10; Romans 5:8; 6:23).

Christianity teaches that in order to be saved and be granted entrance into heaven after death, one must place one’s faith entirely in the finished work of Christ on the cross. If we believe that Christ died in our place and paid the price of our own sins, and rose again, then we are saved. There is nothing that anyone can do to earn salvation. We cannot be “good enough” to please God on our own, because we are all sinners (Isaiah 53:6; 64:6-7). There is nothing more to be done, because Christ has done all the work! When He was on the cross, Jesus said, “It is finished” (John 19:30), meaning that the work of redemption was completed. According to Christianity, salvation is freedom from the old sin nature and freedom to pursue a right relationship with God. Where we were once slaves to sin, we are now slaves to Christ (Romans 6:15-22).

As long as believers live on this earth in their sinful bodies, they will engage in a constant struggle with sin. However, Christians

⁶³ 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21

⁶⁴ Alfeyev, Hilarion "The Trinitarian Teaching of Saint Gregory Nazianzen". In Stewart, M. (ed.). *The Trinity: East/West Dialogue*. Springer. (2013).

can have victory in the struggle with sin by studying and applying God's Word in their lives and being controlled by the Holy Spirit - that is, submitting to the Spirit's leading in everyday circumstances. Islam on the other hand literally translated "surrender" or "submission" to the will of Allah was founded in the Middle East in the 7th century C.E., in the Arabian peninsula on the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad originally Abu al-Qasim Muḥammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib ibn Hashim and articulated by the Qur'an, considered by its devotees to be the verbatim word of the Muslim God (Allah), and, for the vast majority of adherents, chronicled teachings and normative practice (Sunnah) and teachings (hadith) of Prophet Muhammad.⁶⁵

In its fullest form, Islam is a complete, (100%) system of life, defining the ethics and behaviour of its people with religious, legal, political, economic, and social laws influencing the cultural and social identity of followers. It is built on the belief that Allah is the one and true God with no partner or equal. Known as Tawhid⁶⁶ in Arabic, Islamic monotheism is the single most important concept of faith and life including Tawheed Ar-Rububiyah, (Oneness of Divine Lordship), Tawheed Al-Uluhiyyah, (Oneness of the Divine Nature), and Tawheed Al-Asmaa was Sifaat, (Oneness of the Divine Names and Attributes).⁶⁷ No act of worship or devotion has any meaning or value if this concept is in any way compromised. Originally derived from the kalimah shahada - (the Islamic declaration of Faith) *lā 'ilāha 'illā-llāh, muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh* - there is no

⁶⁵ Esposito, John Islam: The Straight Path (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press. (1998). 9, 12; Peters, F.E. Islam: A Guide for Jews and Christians. Princeton University Press. (2003).

⁶⁶ "Tawhid." In The Oxford Dictionary of Islam. , edited by John L. Esposito. Oxford Islamic Studies Online, <http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t125/e2356> (accessed 01-May-2020).

⁶⁷ William Chittick, Wahdat Al-Wujud, Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World, p. 727

god but Allah. Muhammad is the messenger of Allah (Surah 3:19; 63:2).

Generally, Islam is built on certain principles, which is referred to as the pillars or foundational doctrines of the Islamic religion. These doctrines comprise five official acts considered obligatory for all Muslims.⁶⁸ The Quran presents them as a framework for worship and a sign of commitment to faith. The five pillars are the (1) Shahadah; witnessing the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad, (2) Salat; regular observance of the five prescribed daily prayers (3) Zakat; almsgiving, (4) fasting (sawm), dawn to dusk fasting during the month of Ramadan, (5) Hajj; pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime.

Like the Shemar Yishrael, Tawhid is the defining doctrine of Islam. It declares absolute monotheism - the unity and uniqueness of God as creator and sustainer of the universe. Used by Islamic reformers and activists as an organizing principle for human society and the basis of religious knowledge, history, metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics, as well as social, economic, and world order. Tawhid denote the totality of discussion of God, his existence and his various attributes. It constitutes the foremost article of the profession of faith. The first part, the shahada, is the declaration of belief in the oneness of God (Islamic monotheism). To attribute divinity to anything or anyone else, is shirk (an unpardonable sin according to the Qur'an, if repentance is not sought afterwards).

Muslims believe that the entirety of the Islamic teaching rests on the principle of Tawhid. There are three traditional categories of Tawhid; Tawheed al-Rububiyya, (Oneness of Divine Lordship): Muslims believe that Allah caused all things to exist. Allah is the only One Who created and maintains all things. Allah is not in need of help or assistance in His Lordship over creation. Muslims reject any suggestion that Allah has

⁶⁸ Pillars of Islam". Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. United Kingdom: Oxford University. Retrieved 2010-11-17.

partners who share in His actions. While Muslims greatly respect their prophets, including Mohammad and Jesus, they firmly separate them from Allah. Tawheed Al-Uluhiyah, (Oneness of Divine Nature): Because Allah is the sole Creator and Maintainer of the universe, it is to Allah alone that we should direct our worship. Islam teaches that the only being worthy of worship is Allah (God).

Tawheed Al-Asmaa was Sifaat, (Oneness of Divine Names and Attributes): The Quran is filled with descriptions of Allah's nature, often through attributes and special names. The Merciful, the All-Seeing, the Magnificent, etc. are all names which describe Allah's nature and should only be used to do so. Allah is distinct from His creation. As human beings, Muslims believe that we may strive to understand and emulate certain values, but that Allah alone has these attributes perfectly, in full, and in their entirety. Tawhid focuses on philosophical considerations about God's essence and attributes and the validity of the institution of the caliphate.⁶⁹ It was used as an organizing principle for human society and the basis of religious knowledge, history, metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics, as well as social, economic, and world order. It was interpreted as a declaration that made human beings responsible for submitting to and carrying out the revealed will of Allah through religious practice, ritual, and actions.

Influence on Christian and Muslim understanding of God, mission and people of other faiths

Religious exclusivism, is one of the three classic typologies created by Alan Race in order to describe religions relative to one another, it is the state when one religion, to the exclusion of all others, think to have the correct understanding of God,

⁶⁹ Johnson, Steve A. "Ibn Sinā's Fourth Ontological Argument for God's Existence". *The Muslim World*. (1984). 74 (3-4): 161-171.
doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.1984.tb03452.x. ISSN 0027-4909.

truth and salvation.⁷⁰ Douglas Pratt categorize exclusivism in three subdivisions – open, closed and extreme. Citing t’Hooft and Kraemer⁷¹, Pratt says open exclusivism, while never ceding the superior position, ‘may at least be amenable disposed toward the other,’ if only in order to know them well enough for possible conversion. The relationship is not entered into on equal ground, nor with the openness to a significant reciprocal change of self-identity. If dialogue is entered into, it is only for mutual edification and an increase in good will.⁷² Closed exclusivism offers no chance for a relationship, other than acknowledging the other’s right to exist.

An extreme, hard-line exclusivism often leads to a fundamentalist perspective. Pratt states, ‘Fundamentalism as a mindset, is a mentality that expresses the modern quest for universality and coherence writ large: only one truth; one authority; one authentic narrative that accounts for all; one right way to be.’⁷³ The logical conclusion for this fundamentalist mindset is taking steps to eliminate the other, as one would a business competitor. Pratt states, ‘the negation of otherness is perhaps critical, for it involves a devaluing and dismissal of the "other," whether in terms of rival community or competing alterities, ideological or otherwise. In the process of negating the other, the self is asserted as inherently superior. My God is greater than your god.’⁷⁴

Diana Eck states, ‘Exclusivism is more than simply a conviction about the power of the particular vision one has; it is a conviction about its finality and its absolute priority over

⁷⁰ Race, Alan. “Theologies of Religions in Change: Factors in the Shape of a Debate.” *Christian Approaches to Other Faiths*. Paul Hedges and Alan Race, eds. (London: SCM, 2008): 14.

⁷¹ t’Hooft and Kraemer. “Shaking the Fundamentals: Religious Plurality and Ecumenical Movement.” Jan Van Lin, Amsterdam New York, NY 2002

⁷² Pratt, Douglas. "Exclusivism and Exclusivity: A Contemporary Theological Challenge." *Pacifica* 20.3 (2007): 297.

⁷³ Pratt, 293.

⁷⁴ Pratt, 298-99.

competing views'.⁷⁵ Paul Moser posits two forms of exclusivism: logical religious exclusivism, which asserts that since the contradictory, foundational truth claims for each religion excludes some or many of them from being true;⁷⁶ and the doxastic redemptive exclusivism.⁷⁷ History is beset with collections of dogmatic theological apologetics, and formulated suppositions that set one religion or prophetic leader over or against the other. There have been several polemics, discourses and open confrontations to maligned and ridicule one over the other on claims of inspiration of scripture, prophethood and divine-human nature of prophetic leaders.

Both religions have attacked every fundamental teaching of the other on those claims and insisted they are dishonest fabrications and unsubstantiated claims in heavy dross of dogma. This has brought about a lot of juxtapositions, legends and mythologies about their miraculous conception, birth, life among men, death and life after. A particular subject that has brought such sharp tension between Christians, Muslims and people of other religion is the regard for their prophetic leaders; their role, status and relationship with God and the universe. A number of religious debates and rhetorics have been organized and postulated to spearhead or put the one prophetic leader ahead of the other to make them prominent and foremost. Christians for instance have in several place in scripture where their prophetic leader is claimed to have said he wielded a singular monopoly over access to the kingdom of God and that he is the only means by which one can see God (John 14:5-6 AMP)

In other similar places various claims have been attributed to him making himself equal with God by claiming that those who have seen him have seen God (John 14:8-11: 10:30). It is

⁷⁵ Pratt, Douglas. "Exclusivism and Exclusivity: A Contemporary Theological Challenge." *Pacifica* 20.3 (2007): 296

⁷⁶ Moser, Paul K. "Religious Exclusivism." *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity* (2010): 78.

⁷⁷Moser, 83.

claimed further elsewhere in John 1:3 RSV that, 'all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made'. In response to such audacious claims, Muslims also have stretch further to claim a more advanced and so called, honest claim about their prophet leader. First, they repudiate the claim of any equality with Allah (God) or association with him. In Islam, *shirk* (Arabic: شرك *širk*) is the sin of practicing idolatry or polytheism, i.e., the deification or worship of anyone or anything besides Allah.⁷⁸ Literally, it means, 'ascribing or the establishment of partners beside Allah. It is the evil opposed to the virtue of Tawhid (Islamic monotheism). In Islamic law and jurisprudence *shirk* is a crime.⁷⁹

In Surah 14:30 the Quran states, 'And they have set up rivals to Allah to mislead people from His way. Say, 'Enjoy yourselves a while, then, surely, your journey is toward the Fire.' The whole chapter 19 (surah 19) is dedicated to disproving the Christian theology and claim of the sonship and divinity of Jesus Christ by retelling how his birth came about and why the position of Christians is a preposterous one. It is further claimed that Jesus himself said (Surah 14:19) that, 'it does not befit the Majesty of Allah to take unto Himself a son. Holy is He. When He decrees a thing, He says to it, 'Be!', and it is'. Such has been the level of exclusivity between Christianity, Islam and other religion. This has brought such a huge struggle between the two religions.

The expressions of views that are exclusivists has brought about a state of intolerance regarding views and beliefs that does not hold similar understandings. Such teaching as emphasised in both the Shema Yishrael and Tawhid al 'Kitaab has created a kind of chasm between each of the religions and others. For instance, on the concept of God, in Islam, God

⁷⁸ Kamoonpuri, S: "Basic Beliefs of Islam" pages 42-58. Tanzania Printers Limited, 2001.

⁷⁹ Gimaret, D. "Shirk". In P. Bearman; Th. Bianquis; C.E. Bosworth; E. van Donzel; W.P. Heinrichs (eds.). *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd ed.). (2012). Brill. doi:10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_6965.

(Arabic: الله, translit. Allah, contraction of إِلَه al-ilah, lit. "the God") is the God, the absolute one, the all-powerful and all-knowing ruler of the universe, and the creator of everything in existence. Islam emphasizes that God is strictly singular (*tawhīd*), unique (*wāḥid*), inherently one (*aḥad*), all-merciful and omnipotent. God is neither a material nor a spiritual being. He is according to Islamic teachings, 'beyond the Throne (Surah 9:129)', and according to the Quran, 'No vision can grasp him, but His grasp is over all vision'. He is above all comprehension, yet is acquainted with all things (Surah 6:103-104).

Therefore, any expression that is found lacking in such emphasis is seen to be a deception (*makara*) and disbelief (*kufri*) it must therefore receive open rejection and condemnation and anybody or group of people that hold such beliefs if need be must be annihilated (*purged*).⁸⁰ There is great show of unwillingness to accept views, beliefs, or behaviour that differ from the cultural views of the personality or character of God as taught and held in each religion. For example in Isaiah 45:18 (NIV) it is recorded that, 'For this is what the LORD says - he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited - he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other'. In this instance, the God of the bible even sets himself up against other gods and declares them inferior to himself, 'I am the LORD, and there is no other.' Clearly, there is an encouragement not to tolerate any views of another god in existence.

Within Islam, however, such a concept of plurality within God is a denial of monotheism (*tawhid*) and foreign to the revelation found in Muslim scripture. The Qur'an repeatedly asserts God's absolute oneness, ruling out the possibility of another being

⁸⁰ "Mu'āhid", in: Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 06 August 2018
<https://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_DUM_3909> First published online: 2012 First print edition: 1960-2007

sharing his sovereignty or nature. For instance, in Qur'an, Sura 4:171, the prophet Muhammad is said to have addressed Christians by saying, 'O People of the Scripture. do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [*created at a command*] from Him. So, believe in Allah and His messengers. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.

In Qur'an, sura 5 (Al-Ma'ida), ayat 72-75 we also read, 'They have certainly disbelieved who say, " Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary" while the Messiah has said, "O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Indeed, he who associates others with Allah - Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers. They have certainly disbelieved who say, " Allah is the third of three." And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment. So, will they not repent to Allah and seek His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded.

In Qur'an, sura 5 (Al-Ma'ida), ayat 116-118 it is said again that, 'And [*beware the Day*] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah ?"' He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen. I said not to them except what You commanded me - to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but

when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness. If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

Furthermore, verses 19:88-93, 23:91, and 112:1-4 states that, 'And they say, "The Most Merciful has taken [for Himself] a son." You have done an atrocious thing. The heavens almost rupture therefrom and the earth splits open and the mountains collapse in devastation that they attribute to the Most Merciful a son. And it is not appropriate for the Most Merciful that He should take a son. There is no one in the heavens and earth but that he comes to the Most Merciful as a servant. Qur'an, sura 19 (Maryam (sura)), ayat 88-93, 'Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him]. Qur'an, sura 23 (Al-Mumenoon), ayat 91, 'Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; He begetteth not, nor is He begotten; And there is none like unto Him (Qur'an, sura 112 (Al-Ikhlās), ayat 1-4)

Conclusion

The discussion has shown that both Christians and Muslim regard the two concepts Shemah Yishrael and Tawhid al-Kitab as uncompromising doctrines of monotheism. The doctrines have shaped their responds to everything around them. What is more challenging is the push for proselytism which has created extremist methodologies and approaches. it should suggest that if the Christian or Muslim God is eternal, unchanging and all powerful is claimed widely then he should be seen doing something new in the lives of people who hold beliefs and doctrines that are different from the ones held by both Christians and Muslim. It should suffice that both Christians and Muslims have many other grounds that should let them relate positively towards other faith people than

religion. Indeed, if in relating to other people we have no reason but religion then our humanity is incomplete and shallow. As long as we share the same earth, breath, and humanity we are naturally drawn to each other and to ensure that there is conducive conditions that make everyone live their humanity to the fullest.

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