



DIVINE PERFECTION

Christianity and Islam on Sin & Salvation

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Divine Perfection

- Course Outline:

1. The importance of love
2. The hamartiological and soteriological positionings of Islam and Christianity
3. Defining Maximal Perfection
4. The Adamic conundrum
5. Trinity in light of maximal perfection
5. Maximal love of God
7. The maximal perfection of Allah

Sin and Salvation in Islam and Christianity

- Douglas Estes notes, “**Soteriology** is the heart of theology since it explains how people can know and relate to God... is critical for theology in that salvation is a basic and fundamental need of all people.”

Douglas Estes, Soteriology in *The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization*, p. 2215
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470670606.wbecc1287>

The Importance of Love

- Why we do what we do:

"Actions are according to intentions, and everyone will get what was intended."
(Bukhari and Muslim)

- Greatest motivating factor is love of God
- "...those who have attained to faith love God more than all else." 2:165
- Allah is *al-Wadud* (All-Loving): "Surely my Lord is Most Merciful, All-Loving."
11:90

Ibn al-Qayyim - no emotion should surpass that love

The most important love is love for Allah who allows all other forms of love to exist.

The Importance of Love

- Our inner struggles - Allah (subhanhu wa ta'aala) instructing Musa what to say to Fir'own:

Go to Pharaoh, for he has truly transgressed 'all bounds'.

And say, 'Would you 'be willing to 'purify yourself,

and let me guide you to your Lord so that you will be in awe 'of Him'?''" (79:17-19)

The most important thing you love for somebody else and that you love for yourself is to know God, to love and revere Him.

The Importance of Love

Having genuine concern and love for others: “The servant does not attain the reality of faith until he loves for people what he loves for himself of goodness.” Sahih Ibn Hibban 238

A Prophetic prayer:

“O Allāh, provide me with Your love and the love of those whose love will benefit me with You. O Allāh, whatever you provided to me of the things that I love, make them a source of strength for me in pursuing what You love. O Allāh, and whatever You kept away from me of the things that I crave, make their absence free up time that I can devote to whatever You love.” Sunan al-Tirmidhī 3413

Everything should be encapsulated in this emotion of love

Our strong rational basis for belief

- Having a strong belief will lead to conviction, fulfilment and spiritual nourishment
- Example of goodly word like a goodly tree

Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches reach the sky,

‘always’ yielding its fruit in every season by the Will of its Lord. This is how Allah sets forth parables for the people, so perhaps they will be mindful.

And the parable of an evil word is that of an evil tree, uprooted from the earth, having no stability.

Allah makes the believers steadfast with the firm Word ‘of faith’ in this worldly life and the Hereafter. And Allah leaves the wrongdoers to stray. For Allah does what He wills. 14:24-27

Our strong rational basis for belief

- Could also result in an internal state of constriction – mental and spiritual states

Can those who had been dead, to whom We gave life and a light with which they can walk among people, be compared to those in complete darkness from which they can never emerge? That is how the misdeeds of the disbelievers have been made appealing to them. 6:122

But whoever turns away from My Reminder will certainly have a miserable life, then We will raise them up blind on the Day of Judgment.”

They will cry, “My Lord! Why have you raised me up blind, although I used to see?” Allah will respond, “It is so, just as Our revelations came to you and you neglected them, so Today you are neglected.” 20:124-126

Hamartiology in Christianity

- ▶ Dr. William Lane Craig posits, “Christ’s death on the cross is God’s means of reconciling a sinful and estranged humanity to Himself” and cites I. Howard Marshall who asserts that the central theme or message of the New Testament is reconciliation with God.
- ▶ Atonement’ is thus the reconciliation of God and humanity. In theology it is used ‘to denote the work of Christ in dealing with the problem posed by the sin of man, and in bringing sinners into right relation with God.’”

Hamartiology in Christianity

- ▶ “The biblical view is that the wicked deserve punishment (Rom 1.32; Heb 10.29) and ascribes to God retribution (ekdikēsis; avtapodoma) for sins (Rom 11.9; 12.19), so that God’s justice must be in some significant measure retributive.” William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 68.
- ▶ In Christian theology God is held to be perfect and incapable of sin (Matt.5:48; 1 Pet. 1:15-16)
- ▶ “God, in all three Persons, existed in perfect divine bliss before He brought the finite universe into being, and just as He had no need to create the world, so also He was under no necessity to make finite creatures to populate it. Nevertheless, God in His infinite wisdom, love, and mercy, did bring into being an entire host of creatures to fill His universe, angelic creatures who, in a finite but significant way, all possessed the means of self-determination.” Dr. Luginbill, ‘Hamartiology: The Biblical Study of Sin’ - <https://ichthys.com/3B-Hamartio.htm>

Hamartiology in Christianity

- ▶ Adam as the initial transgressor

“Having sinned, and facing the inevitable end of temporal life, eternal death (or "the second death") was the inescapable sentence now hanging over their heads (Rev.21:8; cf. Rev.2:11; 20:6; 20:11-15), an outcome inevitably and inexorably approaching – except for their acceptance in faith of God's solution in the Person of the promised Seed.”

Dr. Luginbill, ‘Hamartiology: The Biblical Study of Sin’ - <https://ichthys.com/3B-Hamartio.htm>

- ▶ Adam: three layers of death: spiritual, physical and eternal:

“As a consequence of their spiritual death, Adam and Eve were alienated from the life of God.”

Dr. Luginbill, ‘Hamartiology: The Biblical Study of Sin’ - <https://ichthys.com/3B-Hamartio.htm>

Hamartiology in Christianity

- ▶ Much that we agree with. Story of Adam and Eve – Genesis – not to eat from the tree, to enjoy the garden.
- ▶ Eve takes fruit to Adam. Cast out. Difficult lives – women birth pains, man sweat and toil in the land
- ▶ So many atonement theories emerged.
- ▶ Augustine of Hippo – ransom theory – God pays the devil a ransom – Christus victor theory
- ▶ J. Couenhoven commented, Augustine “never really explains how all did exist and act in Ādam, leaving the matter rather mysterious” (Couenhoven, J. (2013). *Stricken by Sin, Cured by Christ: Agency, Necessity, and Culpability in Augustinian Theology*. Oxford University Press)
 - ▶ What would be enough for God to forgive us and to be soothed?

Theories of Atonement

Christus Victor (ransom) theory

- Most popular for 900 years
- “God agreed to give His Son over to Satan’s power in exchange for the human beings he held captive.” William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 29-30.
- “But to whom did Christ give his soul for ransom? Surely not to God. Could it then be to the Evil One? For he had us in his power until the ransom for us should be given to him, even the life of Christ. The Evil One had been deceived and led to suppose that he was capable of mastering the soul and did not see that to hold him involved a trial of strength greater than he could successfully undertake Hence it was not with gold or with perishable money that we were redeemed, but with the precious blood of Christ. (Origen) (Commentary on Matthew xvi.8);
- ▶ Dr. Craig explains that such early discussions had in their ideas a kind of conflict between God and Satan, that the Fathers “often emphasised God’s desire to triumph over Satan, not by sheer power alone, but by just means that respected Satan’s “rights.”

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Theories of Atonement

Christus Victor (ransom) theory

- Dr Craig explains that “one of the most interesting features of the Christus Victor theory espoused by the Church Fathers is their widespread conviction that Christ’s incarnation and death were not necessary for man’s redemption.”
- Augustine is cited, Augustine asserted bluntly: “They are fools who say the wisdom of God could not otherwise free men than by taking human nature, and being born of a woman, and suffering all that he did at the hands of sinners.” Augustine. (1865). “De Agone Christiano [On the Christian Struggle].” In J. P. Migne, ed., *Patrologia Latina* 40. Paris: Garnier fratres, cols. 289–310.

http://www.augustinus.it/latino/agone_cristiano/index.htm; William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 31.

Theories of Atonement

Christus Victor (ransom) theory

- ▶ Dr Craig has explained that Christ represented us before God so that his punishment became our punishment and divine justice was satisfied.
- ▶ Christian theologians have long questioned however whether: Jesus voluntarily died for our sins or not? was he punished or not? was the punishment to soothe God's temper? was a ransom paid to the devil, so mankind would be free from the bondage of sin? Was it instead paid to God? Did Jesus take mankind's punishment or, was it a voluntary sacrifice?
- ▶ The question of guilt is also one of some concern. Dr. Craig argues that Jesus paid the price for our guilt, that he took on mankind's guilt. Is the guilt here a standardised guilt based on God's expectations of guilt? In Islam repentance is a personal 'returning' to God following personal guilt, renunciation of sins and a commitment to not return to the sin. The trueness of each person's guilt however is relative to that person's sincerity.
- ▶ However, even though God in Christ is believed to pay the price for our guilt, Dr. Craig explains the views of the Genevan-Italian Reformed scholastic theologian François Turretini who held that:
 - ▶ “though Christ's punishment was not infinite as to duration, he did not suffer eternal damnation as we shall in hell if we reject God's grace. Nevertheless, Christ's suffering was equivalent to eternal damnation on account of the infinite dignity of the person who was suffering. Christ not only suffered a violent and bitter end on the cross but more fundamentally he was forsaken by God the Father by withdrawing from Christ the beatific vision, meaning the vision of God in all His majesty and goodness, and suspended the joy and comfort and sense and fruition of full felicity. The law required no less than this to answer to the demands of justice.” William Lane Craig, Doctrine of Christ Part 17: The Work of Christ (10) - Penal Substitution Theory. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KjDHqbh9nyU>
 - ▶ Was it the human Jesus or the God Jesus who suffered on the cross?

Other atonement theories

- ▶ **Recapitulation theory** - Second-century Greek bishop Irenaeus of Lyons proposed a 'recapitulation theory' in which Ādam and Eve are tempted not by pride but by impatience to have what God had not wanted them to have at that stage before they had reached to full maturity. In Irenaeus' recapitulation theory all of humanity comes to be summed up in Jesus who comes as the Second Ādam.
- ▶ **Fish-hook theory** - Gregory of Nyssa in his Catechetical Discourse: "Since it was not in the nature of the opposing power to undergo the unveiled manifestation of God, the deity was hidden under the veil of our nature, so that, as with ravenous fish, the hook of the deity might be gulped down along with the bait of the flesh. ... In this way, he who practiced deception receives the very same in return. He who first deceived humanity by the bait of sensual pleasure is himself deceived by the presence of the human form. And whereas the enemy wrought his deception for the ruin of our nature, the wise one used his plan of deception for salvation."

Satisfaction theory

- Anselm - Cur Deus Homo (Why God Became Man) - price of sin, argued had to be compensated (satisfactio) through the incarnation and suffering of Christ that man's sins no longer besmirch the holiness of God. Debt cancellation – honour and worship needs to be paid off
- The justice and holiness of God: The dishonouring of God through sin cannot be annulled simply by God's compassion, instead the sin needs to be punished “**since it is not right [recte] to cancel sin without compensation or punishment**; if it be not punished, then it is passed by undischarged” (I.12).
- God becomes human and pays the debt himself - “it does not belong to his liberty or compassion or will to let the sinner go unpunished” (I.12)
- - Divine character – Consider ‘**I have forbidden injustice...**’/ “**My Mercy overcomes...**”
- God and primary identity – Wrathful Punisher/All-Knowing Forgiver

Penal Substitution

- Christ voluntarily bore the suffering in the crucifixion to atone for the sins of mankind
- Punishment due to mankind is thereafter removed. God's wrath is appeased through the death of Jesus and justice has been established.
- Christ was instead 'penalised' by mankind's sins and not punished. Legal fictions: "On this view, although Christ did not himself commit the sins in question, God chose to treat Christ as if he had done those acts."
- Father pours out his anger on the Son
- "The biblical view is that the wicked deserve punishment (Rom 1.32; Heb 10.29) and ascribes to God retribution (ekdikēsis; avtapodoma) for sins (Rom 11.9; 12.19), so that God's justice must be in some significant measure retributive." William Lane Craig, *The Atonement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 68.
- Contenders to this theory – God only satisfied by barbarity of child sacrifice – payment – brutal death/In need of the payment in order to forgive/Suggests God is subordinated to justice in order to forgive.

Theories of Atonement

Peter of Abelard's (d. 1142) contention: ““How very cruel and unjust it seems that someone should require the blood of an innocent person as a ransom, or that in any way it might please him that an innocent person be slain, still less that God should have so accepted the death of his Son that through it he was reconciled to the whole world!” (Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Roman, Bk. 2)

Islamic hamartiology and soteriology

- Many atonement theories emerged to try and explain the role of Jesus in light of the 'Fall' and in light of what the Love of God means.

Richard Swinburne - God could have forgiven the sins of humanity in various ways but the life and death of Jesus became the preferred way

Porter - "It seems fair to say that Christ experienced on the cross the loss of the good gifts and opportunities of human life in friendship with God. These are the rights and privileges we abused, and it seems that they are the rights and privileges Christ gave up on the cross in our stead."

Porter, S. (2004). Swinburnian atonement and the doctrine of penal substitution. In *Faith and philosophy: journal of the Society of Christian Philosophers*.

Islamic hamartiology and soteriology

- Everyone born in a pure state (fitrah)

Prophet Muhammad said, “every child is born in a state of fiṭrah. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian...” Sahih Muslim

“Can there be any doubt about God, Creator of the heavens and Earth?”
The Qur’an, Chapter 14, Verse 10

“[Adhere to] the fitrah of God upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of God . That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.” The Qur’an, Chapter 30, Verse 30

Islamic hamartiology and soteriology

- Man's potential to do both good and evil. Test of life is to push back against evil and promote good.

91:7 - by the soul and how He formed it

91:8 - and inspired it [to know] its own rebellion and piety!

91:9 - The one who purifies his soul succeeds

91:10 - and the one who corrupts it fails.

Islamic hamartiology and soteriology

Our impressions of God - **“What then do you expect from the Lord of all the worlds?”** Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 37, verse 87.

Al-Shafi’i – My impression of you is that you are beautiful so deal with me beautifully.

And be good ‘to others’ as Allah has been good to you. Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 28, verse 77.

On hamartiology (the place of sin) and Islam's doctrine of salvation (soteriology).

Life is thus a test of

- 1) an individual's recognition of God
- 2) of belief in and adherence to His Messenger
- 3) recognition and gratitude for His blessings,
- 4) of the individual's love and devotion to God,
- 5) of the way such God-centric focus inspires good conduct with others.

Islamic hamartiology and soteriology

Sin and its consequences

- Sin is reprehensible to God, and sinners who are unrepentant and obstinate in their sin are not loved by God.
- God’s mercy however extends to all people and God reminds such sinners that His ‘door of forgiveness’ is always open, thus inviting the sinful back to His mercy and grace.
- Ibn Taymīyya explains: “People have two strengths: strength of love and strength of hate. Mankind was only created this way so that they may love the truth which Allāh loves and hate the falsehood which Allāh hates, and those are the ones who love Allāh and are loved by Allāh.”

Ibn Taymīyya. (2018). *The Principle of Love and Desire*. Authentic Statement Publishing, p. 185.

Islamic hamartiology and soteriology

- Adam: between rift and reconciliation – A Biblical perspective
- A Qur’anic outline of events: “But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been...” 2:36
- Stumbling in life is anticipated
- Umar and a sinner – ‘how to behave when one of your brothers slips...’#
- “The Forgiver of sin and Acceptor of repentance, the Severe in punishment, and Infinite in bounty. There is no god ‘worthy of worship’ except Him. To Him ‘alone’ is the final return. 40:3
- Adam receiving words from His Lord – the closeness of Allah to His creation
- Distance and rift with Adam in Christianity (salvation theories: substitution/satisfaction/Christ-victor)

The Adamic Conundrum

- Fundamental ideas
 - Adam as inherently corrupt and humanity inherits such corruption
 - Jesus undoing Adam's corruption as the anti-type – “For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.” Romans 5.19
- Adam as ‘type’ and Jesus as ‘anti-type’
- Christian theological debate and discussion about the purpose of sacrificial death and its bearing on God and His honour and majesty

The Adamic conundrum

- Islamic outlook inspires hope in God's Mercy
- Sin can lead to hopelessness and despair and potentially worsening the state of sin.
- Prophet Nuh and his call to his people:
 2. He said: "O my people! Verily, I am a plain warner to you,
 3. "That you should worship Allah (Alone), be dutiful to Him, and obey me,
 4. "He (Allah) will forgive you of your sins and respite you to an appointed term. Verily, the term of Allah when it comes, cannot be delayed, if you but knew."
 5. He said: "O my Lord! Verily, I have called my people night and day (i.e. secretly and openly to accept the doctrine of Islamic Monotheism) ,
 6. "But all my calling added nothing but to (their) flight (from the truth).
 7. "And verily! Every time I called unto them that You might forgive them, they thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, and persisted (in their refusal), and magnified themselves in pride.
 8. "Then verily, I called to them openly (aloud);
 9. "Then verily, I proclaimed to them in public, and I have appealed to them in private,
 10. "I said (to them): 'Ask forgiveness from your Lord; Verily, He is Oft-Forgiving;

The Adamic conundrum

- The meaningfulness of love – seen through mercy and forgiveness
- *fa talaqqā Ādam min rabbihi kalimāt* [then Ādam received from his Lord some words] press upon God’s closeness to his remorseful servant.
- God aided Ādam in teaching him and his progeny how to forever return to their Lord’s pleasure: “Then Ādam received from his Lord some words, and He accepted his repentance: “Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 2, verses 37.
- Allah is Ever-Near
- **“They replied, “Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we will certainly be losers.” 7:23**

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ “Theism in general proclaims that God is wholly perfect; and, as is entirely natural, it interprets this Divine perfection in terms of “the highest we know” in human experience; applying to God accordingly, such concepts as those of goodness, wisdom and power in their highest manifestations.” C.A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood* (London: George Allen and Unwin: 1957), p. 307.

- ▶ Nagasawa positions his Omni God Thesis as one that stresses on three of God’s most essential attributes (Yujin Nagawa, *Maximal God: A New Defence of Perfect Being Theism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 80.)
 1. that God is necessarily omniscient
 2. necessarily omnipotent
 3. necessarily omnibenevolent.

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ In the Islamic tradition God is far above any human conception of Him. He is Supreme, absolute Unity and completely unrelated to His Creation.
- ▶ We can do nothing to lessen Him. God is fully aware, maximally loving and forgiving and not challenged by anything. God is indeed good but maximally good in what befits His majesty and honour. It is a goodness far surpassing anything we know of goodness, a love far surpassing what we know of love. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ would pray: “I cannot fully praise you [O God], for you are as you have praised yourself.”(Sahih Muslim)
- ▶ God is omniscient, He is All-Knowing and there is nothing that escapes His knowledge. For Rogers His omniscience entails “direct knowledge of all objects, states of affairs, propositions and possibilities.” God’s knowledge is not limited, His knowledge encompasses the past, present and the future. The Qur’ān explains: “No calamity can ever befall the earth, and neither your own selves, unless it be [laid down] in Our decree before We bring it into being: verily, all this is easy for God.” (57:22)
- ▶ Also, “O my dear son,” [continued Luqman,] “verily, if there be but the weight of a mustard-seed, and though it be [hidden] in a rock, or in the skies, or in the earth, God will bring it to light: for, behold, God is unfathomable [in His wisdom], all-aware.” (31:16)

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ Anselm's proclamation, for example, in the first chapter of his *Proslogion* has as his first premise: "For we believe that You are that than which a greater cannot be conceived." Dr. Craig too uses this as a premise in his discussions on atonement.

(Anselm of Canterbury, *Proslogion* in Complete philosophical and theological treatises of Anselm of Canterbury, trans. Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (Minneapolis: The Arthur J. Banning Press), p. 93.)

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ Both would agree that God is an absolutely perfect being, omniscient, omnipotent, most beneficent.
- ▶ Murphy (2019) holds that “a perfectly good being has the best desires that a being can have, and exhibits the best traits of character, and acts in an unsurpassably excellent way.”

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ Firstly, Muslims hold that God is above any shortcoming, that absolute perfection belongs to Him. Allāh described Himself with attributes of perfection, that “the Most Beautiful Names belong to Allāh” 7:180
- ▶ He states that none of His creation is like Him, “There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer” 42:11
- ▶ The holiness of Allāh is never compromised or challenged by anything that His creation does. One of His names is Al-Quddūs (The Most Holy, The Most Pure, The All-Perfect): “Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth glorifies Allāh, the King (of everything), the Holy, the All-Mighty, the All-Wise” 62:1
- ▶ Allāh describes Himself as Al-Salam (the One Free from all defects): “He is Allāh beside whom none has the right to be worshipped but He, the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects.” 59:23

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ The 14th century jurisprudential scholar Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya explained the divine attribute of ‘Al-Salam’:

“To him belongs absolute perfection in all aspects, and perfection is an essential part of His Essence, and it cannot be otherwise. The name as-Salaam implies that His deeds are free of any idleness, wrongdoing and anything that is contrary to wisdom; and that His attributes are free of any similarity to the attributes of created beings; and that His Essence is free of any shortcomings or faults; and that His names are free of any blameworthy meanings. So the name as-Salaam implies an affirmation of all perfections and a negation of all shortcomings in His case.” Ahkaam Ahl adh-Dhimmah (1/413-414).

Maximal Perfection

- ▶ Allah's Ever Nearness to Adam is also shown to His other servants:
- ▶ The verse here from Sūrah al-Tawba illustrates the loving nature of God:
- ▶ “And ‘Allāh has also turned in mercy to’ the three who had remained behind, ‘whose guilt distressed them’ until the earth, despite its vastness, seemed to close in on them, and their souls were torn in anguish. They knew there was no refuge from Allāh except in Him. Then He turned to them in mercy so that they might repent. Surely Allāh ‘alone’ is the Acceptor of Repentance, Most Merciful.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 9, verse 118.
- ▶ It juxtaposes man’s despondency and stricken state with the encompassing mercy of God.
- ▶ The imagery of the earth and their souls “closing in around them” reflects what the consequence of sin creates in man when he is conscious of his error and seeks reconciliation with God.
- ▶ Ādam too, further to his transgression says a prayer that denoted internal blame and a realisation of the consequence of his sinAllah assists His servants and helps them get back up.

Maximal Perfection

All salvation is dependent on the Mercy of God. The Prophet Muhammad said, “none would be able to enter Paradise because of his deeds alone. The Companions asked: Allāh's Messenger, not even you? Thereupon he said: Not even I, but that Allāh wraps me in His Mercy” Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2818 a

- “Had it not been for Allāh’s grace and mercy upon you, none of you would have ever been purified. But Allāh purifies whoever He wills. And Allāh is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 24, verse 21.
- “If it were not for God’s bounty and mercy and the fact that He is compassionate and merciful.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 24, verse 20.
- “Had it not been for Allāh’s grace and mercy upon you in this world and the Hereafter, you would have certainly been touched with a tremendous punishment for what you plunged into—” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 24, verse 14.

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God is just: “O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to be as pious as the most pious heart of any one man of you, that would not increase My dominion in anything. O My servants, were the first of you and the last of you, the human of you and the jinn of you to be as wicked as the most wicked heart of any one man of you, that would not decrease My dominion in anything.” Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2577

The piety of the most pious has no effect on God's majesty and nor does the wickedness of the most wicked have any bearing on the majesty of God.

Dr. Craig's first argument: Trinity is misrepresented in the Qur'an

“Mohammed evidently thought that Christians believed in a Trinity composed of God the Father, Mary, and their offspring Jesus. It's no wonder that he regarded such a ridiculous doctrine as blasphemous!” He references Surah 5:117:

God will say: ‘Jesus Son of Mary, did you ever say to mankind: “Worship me and my mother as gods besides God?”’ ‘Glory be to you,’ he will answer, ‘I could never have claimed what I have no right to.’

According to Craig the idea of the trinity for the Muslims “**does touch deep nerves.**”

William Lane Craig, ‘Concept of God in Islam and Christianity’ -

<https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/popular-writings/christianity-other-faiths/concept-of-god-in-islam-and-christianity/>;

(35:45) A Critique of Islam (William Lane Craig)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LSLSfatyeqo> (uploaded May 3rd, 2011) Last accessed 23/10/2020

Al-Qur'ān. Chapter 5, verse 116.

Dr. Craig's first argument: Trinity is misrepresented in the Qur'an

There is much that Craig unfortunately misses in his part-selection of Qur'ānic verse(s); repeated in full here:

“When God says, ‘Jesus, son of Mary, did you say to people, “Take me and my mother as two gods alongside God”?’ he will say, ‘May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say- if I had said such a thing You would have known it: You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen.’”

“I told them only what You commanded me to: “Worship God, my Lord and your Lord.” I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul, You alone have been the watcher over them: You are witness to all things.”

“And if You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise.” Al-Qur'ān. Chapter 5, verse 116-118.

Dr. Craig's first argument: Trinity is misrepresented in the Qur'an

1. Meaning of the word 'ilah' – Not always in reference to the Creator/Sustainer.
 - Ibn al-Qayyim explained, “The Ilah is he to whom the hearts are inclined to out of; love, reverence, penitence, honour, glorification, fear, hope and trust.”
 - Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali said, “Ilah is the One Who is obeyed and not disobeyed out of; His majesty, reverence, love, fear, hope, trust, asking from Him and directing prayers to Him.”

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1. Meaning of the word 'ilah' – Not always in reference to the Creator/Sustainer.
 - “Have you seen the one who takes as his god (*ilāh*) his own desire? Then would you be responsible for him?” Al-Qur'ān. Chapter 25, verse 43.
 - “They have taken other gods, instead of Allāh, seeking strength and protection through them.” Al-Qur'ān. Chapter 19, verse 81.

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2. The commonly uncited verses

- "...You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen."
- "I told them only what You commanded me to: "Worship God, my Lord and your Lord." I was a witness over them during my time among them. Ever since You took my soul, You alone have been the watcher over them: You are witness to all things."
- "And if You punish them, they are Your servants; if You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise." Al-Qur'ān. Chapter 5, verses 116-118.

According to John Piper, "There is no salvation without the deity of Christ." Though Christ, in his affirmation that God alone can secure someone's salvation - "if You forgive them, You are the Almighty, the Wise." - **negates the very thing Christians came to believe about him – that salvation is only through him.**

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3. Elsewhere where trinity is mentioned, doesn't mention Mary except as Jesus' mother

- “O People of the Book! Do not go to extremes regarding your faith; say nothing about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, was no more than a messenger of Allah and the fulfilment of His Word through Mary and a spirit ‘created by a command’ from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers and do not say, “Trinity.” Stop!—for your own good. Allah is only One God. Glory be to Him! He is far above having a son! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And Allah is sufficient as a Trustee of Affairs. Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 4, verses 171

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4. What the verses do state:

- That the Christians have exaggerated their claims about Christ
- That Jesus was a messenger of God born of a woman
- That there is a saying of “three” (Trinity) that infringes upon the Oneness of God which God warns Christians about.
- God is independent- the ascription on sonship here is remarkably set in the context of Lordship and dominion – “everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him”. Thus, God does not have anyone who shares in His power. The verse uses the phrase *سُبْحَانَهُ* (utterly remote is He, in His glory) - from having a son): “Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that he should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allāh is sufficient as Defender.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 4, verse 171.

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5. Many Christians do indeed take Mary as a 'deity' –
 - “Some were very much eager to attribute to her a new title while still others diminish her status. But the surprising thing is that within the context of this eagerness, some would readily cross the dividing line between what is properly human to that of divine. In some sense, it appears that it already compromises the identity and function of her Son. It is in this sense that some Protestant reformers would rant their tirade against the Catholic Church for being unscriptural and for putting Mary at par with her Son.” Magos, M.J.H. ‘Mary Among the Churches: Revisiting the Ecumenical Potential of Vatican II’s Mariology’, p. 5.

Stepping back - each one claims the other isn't doing enough
Mariolatry/Mariology

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6. The Islamic approach and repetition of Al-Fatiha –

- “You ‘alone’ we worship and You ‘alone’ we ask for help.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 4, verse 171.

7. Prayer is worship

- “Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you successors in the earth? Is it another god beside God? Little notice you take!” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 27, verse 62.

8. The Qur'an is not contingent on answering every single theological tangent and also addresses theological deviations in generalities: “So believe in Allah and His messengers and do not say, “Trinity.” Stop!—for your own good.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 4, verse 171.

What about the consort?

William Lane Craig –

- “The Creator of the heavens and the earth—how should he have a son, seeing that He has no consort, and He created all things...? (6.102)

The doctrine that Mohammed rejected, namely, that God the Father should consort with a human female to sire a son and these three should then be worshiped as gods, would be rejected by any Christian.” Craig, W.L. Concept of God in Islam and Christianity.

What about the consort?

1. *badī'* as Originator. The name comes from the trilateral root *Ba-da-'a* which means to "to bring about something new that did not exist before". This is juxtaposed with *Khāliq* which can allow for creating from pre-existing material. Yusuf Ali's translation reads:
 - "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth: How can He have a son when He hath no consort? He created all things, and He hath full knowledge of all things."
2. Missionaries don't consider the immediate context of the verse – from the preceding verse
 - "Yet they associate the jinn with Allāh 'in worship', even though He created them, and they falsely attribute to Him sons and daughters out of ignorance. Glorified and Exalted is He above what they claim!" Al-Qur'ān. Chapter 6, verse 100

What about the consort?

3. To say God has a son would presuppose that an inherent likeness between them: “[but] there is nothing like unto Him, and He alone is all-hearing, all-seeing.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 42, verse 11.
4. Christians speak of Jesus as ‘son’, ‘begotten’, ‘only begotten’, ‘begotten not made’, ‘first born’ – same essence.
5. Even if generated from the father one of them has to be *a se*, an independent primary cause. Jesus, originating from God, wouldn’t have aseity.
6. Fourth century Hilary of Poitiers - “The Father therefore is greater, because He is Father: but the Son, because He is Son, is not less” (9.56). Even Craig admits, “This is to talk logical nonsense. It is like saying that six is greater than four, but four is not less than six.”

Love One's Enemies

What is meant by 'love'?

- Matthew 5: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” Matthew 5:43-48.

How do you show that love?

- “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Romans 12:20

Love One's Enemies

The Islamic perspective:

- The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught, “Do not be people without minds of your own, saying that if others treat you well you will treat them well, and that if they do wrong you will do wrong. Instead, accustom yourselves to do good if people do good and not to do wrong if they do wrong.” Al-Tirmidhī 1325
- “Kindness is not found in something except that it makes it beautiful, and it is not removed from something except that it makes it tarnished.” Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2594
- ‘Uqbah ibn ‘Amr reported: I met the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, and he said to me, “O ‘Uqbah, reconcile with whoever cuts you off, give to whoever deprives you, and forgive whoever wrongs you.” Musnad Aḥmad 17452

Love One's Enemies

The Islamic perspective:

- Battle of Uhud – prayer
- “If we begin with the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (s.) himself, it is clear that the virtues of mercy (raḥma) and forbearance towards one's enemies (hilm), a willingness to reconcile and rebuild trust especially in the aftermath of conflict (sulh), and an unflinching commitment to justice (ʿadl) are just some of the key virtues of the Sunna which amount to an obvious analogue for standard practical and historically attested Christian interpretations of the command to love one's enemies.”

Alexander, S.C. (2015). Thanks But No Thanks: How A Noted Theologian's Defense Of Larycia Hawkins Goes Bizarrely Astray.

<https://religiondispatches.org/thanks-but-no-thanks-how-a-noted-theologians-defense-of-larycia-hawkins-goes-bizarrely-astray/>

Love One's Enemies

The Islamic perspective:

The great importance of Mercy in Islam:

- “The merciful ones are those whom the All-Merciful will show mercy on. Be merciful to those on the earth and the One in the heavens will have mercy upon you.” Sunan al-Tirmidhī 1924.
- “and they give food—despite their desire for it—to the poor, the orphan, and the captive...” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 76, verse 8.
- To treat others with goodness and repel what is evil with what is good

The Qur’ān instructs: “Good and evil cannot be equal. Repel evil with what is better and your enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 41, verses 34.

The Perfect Love of God

- William Lane Craig – the Biblical God is “an all-loving God, whose love is universal, impartial, and unconditional, while the God of Islam is not all-loving, but loves only Muslims and whose love is therefore selective, partial, and conditional.”

Craig, W.L. #459 Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?. Retrieved January 8, 2022 from <https://www.reasonablefaith.org/writings/question-answer/do-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god/>

- Allah has a hundred parts to His Mercy:
“Verily, on the day Allāh created the heavens and earth, he created one hundred parts of mercy. Each part can fill what is between the heaven and earth. He made one part of mercy for the earth, from it a mother has compassion for her child, animals and birds have compassion for each other. On the Day of Resurrection, he will perfect this mercy.” Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2753

The Perfect Love of God

1. To always know we have a loving and forgiving God to go back to
2. Divine justice: “And We did not wrong them, but they wronged themselves.” Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 11, verse 101.
- J3. Juxtaposing of love and hate in Hosea 9:15
 - “Because of all their wickedness in Gilgal, I hated them there. Because of their sinful deeds, I’ll drive them out of my house. I’ll no longer love them; all their leaders are rebellious.” Some Christians might be inclined to argue that God loves the sinner but he hates the sin. In addition to the aforementioned verse from Hosea the following expressive verses from the Old Testament, Hosea 9:15

The Perfect Love of God

1. “I HATE THEM WITH PERFECT HATRED” Eric Peels explains, “the most absolute form of hatred is meant here.” This “most absolute for of hatred” Peels, E. I HATE THEM WITH PERFECT HATRED’ (PSALM 139:21-22). Retrieved January 13, 202 from <https://legacy.tyndalehouse.com/Bulletin/59=2008/3%20Peels.pdf>
2. 2. Can the righteous be treated as the sinner are? “Should We treat those who submit to Us as We treat those who do evil?”
 - **What is the matter with you? On what basis do you judge?”** Al-Qur’ān. Chapter 68, verses 35-36.