

## THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ABRAHAMIC RELIGIONS

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### Abstract

Our research has surveyed the philological origins of the word 'science' and 'religion'. Furthermore, it has re-examined the definitions of 'The Science of Religion' and 'The Science of Comparative Religion'. Building on this foundation, the author compared the major similarities and differences between the Jewish, Christian and Islamic Religions, especially via the lens of Monotheism, exploring the Jewish Shema, Christian Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, and Islam's Tawheed. This new research aims to contribute to a better understanding of our three major monotheistic religions.

**Keywords:** Science, Comparative Religion, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Monotheism.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Philological Dimensions of the Word 'Science'

The word 'science' entered the English language in the Middle Ages through the Old French language and is derived from the Latin word 'scientia', meaning 'knowledge'. Similarly, the Greek word for 'science' is 'επιστήμη', derived from the verb 'επίσταμαι', meaning 'to know'. Formerly, 'science' was synonymous with 'the corpus of human knowledge' but its later meaning expressed 'systematized knowledge'. This new meaning was understood in terms of the Aristotelian theory of knowledge, proposing that 'scientific knowledge' was a result of a syllogism that progressed from the necessary first cause grasped by pure reason, in Greek νοῦς. The demonstrative syllogism that follows is an application of term logic in the nous of the Euclidian quod erat demonstrandum. Thereafter, the scholastic thinkers (who specialized in the branches of philosophy that included the seven sciences of mediaeval learning, namely grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy), referred to 'scientific knowledge' as a 'body of methodical observations or ideas concerning a particular subject or theory', commonly called 'philosophy'. However, scepticism arose with regards to the status of natural philosophy as a science. In efforts to elevate physics into the realm of science, Newton himself outlined his Principia on the basis of Euclidian geometry. The words 'philosophy' and 'science' became interchangeable, i.e. experimental philosophy and experimental science (Ross, 1964). Indeed, as the Western world began moving away from the sacred and towards the secular, since the late period of Renaissance and Protestant Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries in Europe, the word 'science' gained pre-eminence over the word 'philosophy'. The leading English social thinker of the Victorian era John Ruskin already wrote in 1874,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Ruskin, *The Nineteenth Century*, 1878, 4, 1072 n. Reprinted in *Works*, ed. Cook and Wedderburn, London, 1908, vol. XXXIV., p. 157 n.

*“The use of the word ‘scientia’, as if it differed from ‘knowledge’, is a modern barbarism. Enhanced usually by the assumption that the knowledge of the difference between acids and alkalis is a more respectable one than that of the difference between vice and virtue.”*

## 1.2 The Philological Dimensions of the Word ‘Religion’

The word ‘religion’ entered the English language in the Middle Ages through the Old French language and from the Latin word ‘religiō’, meaning ‘conscientiousness’, ‘sanctity’, ‘object of veneration’, ‘cult-observance’, ‘reverence’. Likely, it was derived from the Proto-Indo-European root ‘h<sub>2</sub>leg’, with its meanings preserved in Latin ‘diligere’ and ‘(re)lēgere’, meaning ‘to pick up’, via ‘to read (again)’, and ‘ligare’, ‘to bind or tie’.<sup>2</sup> Identical to the Latin ‘(re)lēgere’ is the Greek ‘ἄεργον’, meaning ‘to heed’ and ‘to care for’.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.3 The Science of Religion

Religion is universal, common to all races of men, in all ages, and yet, scholars have not been able to unanimously agree upon a definition of religion. This becomes even more complicated, if we expand our definition to other than monotheistic religions. In such a case, hundreds of definitions may be found, ranging from some so narrow as to be exclusive, to others so broad as to be empty of any significance (Haydon, 1922). Traditional definition of religion described man in relation to the entirety of existence or union with the supernatural, sacred, deity, the First Cause or the Eternal, with characteristic features of a world conception, conviction and conduct (Carus, 1904). The Science of Religion is the product of the deliberate investigation of the facts of religion in accordance with a clearly defined scientific method (Jordan, 1908).

## 1.4 The Science of Comparative Religion (Hierology)

The science of comparative religion or hierology, is the branch of the study of religions that is concerned with the systematic comparison of the past and present religious’ principles and practices, ascertaining their commonalities and differences, for the purposes of perfecting our knowledge. Furthermore, the science of comparative religion explores the causes of the origin, development, decay, corruption, transformation and extinction of religious doctrines, rites, observances and organizations. It systematically reconstructs, categorizes and describes the religious history of mankind and its form as phenomena of thought and conduct. Thus, it is this phenomenal aspect that the science of comparative religion is concerned with (Snell, 1896).

## 2 DISCUSSION

### 2.1 The Similarities between Abrahamic Religions: Monotheism

The term ‘monotheism’ derives from the Greek words ‘μόνος’, ‘monós’ meaning ‘one’, ‘single’ and ‘only’, and ‘θεός’, ‘theós’ meaning ‘god’ or ‘deity’. The earliest known use of the term ‘monotheism’ is by Henry More, ca. 1660, in explicit juxtaposition with both atheism and polytheism. As the science of comparative religion developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, further distinctions were made between traditional monotheism, polytheism, deism, henotheism, pantheism and monism, and other theisms.

In the science of comparative religion, the category of Semitic religions consists of the three monotheistic and prophetic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, that believe in Divine Guidance sent by God to the people through the Prophets of God. The roots of monotheism are linked to the first human Prophet Adam (as)<sup>4</sup>, and according to Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition, monotheism was the original religion of humanity, sometimes referred to as the ‘Adamic religion’. The more commonly used term ‘Semitic religions’ owes its meaning to its ancestral beginning, originating from among the Semites, that included the Jews, Arabs, Mandaeans, Samaritans, Assyrians and others. According to the Torah, the Bible and the Qur’an,

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<sup>2</sup> This etymology, given by the Roman grammarian Servius (end of 4th cent. AD), ‘Religio, id est metus ab eo quod mentem religet, dicta religio’ was supported by the Christian philosopher Lactantius (about 313 AD) who quotes the Roman philosophical poet Lucretius (c. 96 to 55 BC):2, ‘Religionum animus nodis exsolvere’, in proof that he considered ‘ligare’ as the root of ‘religio’. In *Institutiones Divinae* 4:28, Lactantius writes, “Credo nomen religionis a vinculo pietatis esse deductum, quod hominem sibi Deus religaverit et pietate constrinxerit ... melius ergo (quam Cicero) id nomen Lucretius interpretatus est, qui ait religionum se nodos exsolvere.”

<sup>3</sup> Geo. Curtius quotes the Iliad (16,388): “θεων οπιν ούκ ἀλέγοντες.”

<sup>4</sup> Adam is the Hebrew word for ‘man’. It is derived from Hebrew אָדָם, meaning ‘to be red’, referring to the ruddy color of human skin, or from Akkadian ‘adamu’ meaning ‘to make’ or ‘to create’. According to Genesis, Adam was created from the earth by God. Hebrew אֲדָמָה, ‘adamah’ means ‘earth’. In Arabic, Ādam or Aadam آدم.

Semitic people are the descendants of Shem, the son of Prophet Noah (as)<sup>5</sup>. However, Prophet Abraham (as)<sup>6</sup>, ca 1800 BC, is understood as the unifying patriarch of the above mentioned three monotheistic religions. Therefore, these religions are also referred to as the 'Abrahamic religions'. In Judaism, Abraham is the Prophet who received the Covenant on Sinai, the written and oral Law established between the Jewish people and God; in Christianity, he is the archetype of all believers, Jewish or Gentile; and in Islam, he is a link in the chain of prophets that begins with Adam (as) and culminates in Muhammad (as) (Levenson, 2012).

### 2.1.1 Judaism

The first verse of 'שְׁמַע' is found in Ha-Torah Vayikra and embraces the main principles of Judaism and its monotheism (Table 1). When this verse is written in Torah scrolls, the 'ע' of the 'שְׁמַע' and the 'ד' of 'אֱדָד' appear large (Figure 2a, 2b and 2c). When these two letters are put together in the order of their appearance, they make up the word 'עד', meaning 'witness', which signifies the Israelites' testimony to God's kingship, according to Isaiah 43:10:

אַתֶּם עֵדֵי נְאֻם-יְהוָה וְעַבְדֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּחַרְתִּי לְמַעַן תִּדְעוּ וְתֵאמְרוּ לִי וְתִבְיִנוּ כִּי-אֲנִי הוּא לִפְנֵי לֹא-נוֹצֵר אֶל וְאֶחָדִי לֹא יְהִי

"You are my witnesses, says the Lord..."

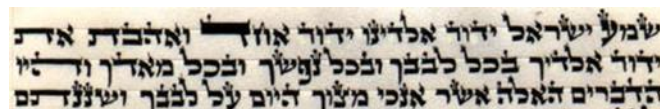
And when they are read in the opposite direction, they make up the word 'דע', meaning 'know', as per Chronicles I 28:9,

וְאַתָּה שְׁלֹמֹה-בְנִי דַע אֶת-אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ וְעַבְדֹהוּ בְלֵב שְׁלֵם וּבְגִפְשׁ חַפְצָה כִּי כָל-לִבְבוֹת דּוֹרְשׁ יְהוָה וְקָל-יִצֵּךְ מְחַשְׁבוֹת מִבֵּין אִם-תִּדְרָשְׁנוּ יִמְצָא לָךְ וְאִם-תִּעְזָבֵנוּ יִזְנִיחֶךָ לְעַד

"And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father..."

**Table 1.** Shema, Deuteronomy Chapter 6:4-9, דְּבָרִים

<b>שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד</b>	4) Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is One.
וְאַהֲבָתָּה, אֶת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, בְּכָל-לִבְבְּךָ וּבְכָל-נַפְשְׁךָ, וּבְכָל-מְאֹדְךָ	5) And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
וְהָיוּ הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה, אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם--עַל-לִבְבְּךָ	6) And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be upon thy heart;
וְשִׁנַּנְתָּם לְבְנֶיךָ, וְדַבַּרְתָּ בָם, בְּשִׁבְתְּךָ בְּבֵיתְךָ וּבְלַכְתְּךָ בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וּבְשֹׁכְבְּךָ וּבְקוּמְךָ	7) and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
וְקָשַׁרְתָּם לְאוֹת, עַל-יָדְךָ; וְהָיוּ לְטֹטְפוֹת, בֵּין עֵינֶיךָ	8) And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes.
וְכָתַבְתָּם עַל-מַזְזוֹת בֵּיתְךָ, וּבְשַׁעְרֶיךָ. {ס}	9) And thou shalt write them upon the door-posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.



**Figure 2a.** Shema, Ari script, generally used by Chassidic Jews

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew שֵׁם, Arabic نوح

<sup>6</sup> Abraham, in Hebrew: אַבְרָהָם, Arabic: إبراهيم Ibrahim.

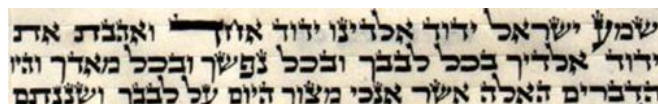


Figure 2b. Shema, Beit Yoseph script, generally used by Ashkenazi Jews



Figure 2c. Shema, Vellish script, generally used by Sephardi Jews

In Hebrew, **שמע** verse has only six words. They are divided into three parts, each of which contains an important message. The first part, “שמע ישראל”, meaning “Hear O Israel”, does not imply hearing by ears but rather implies an understanding and acceptance. The second part, “יהוה אלהינו”, meaning “the Lord our God”, is the declaration that ‘the Lord is our God’. This God is the Supreme Ruler of His universe to Whose supremacy the worshipper fully submits. And the third part, “יהוה אחד”, meaning “the Lord is One”, states the main principles of the Jewish faith, namely its monotheism. The word “One” does not only contrasts with dualism or pluralism, but similarly, as in the Arabic language, means **واحد** in contrast to **احد**, and underlines the verse of Ha-Torah Vayikra 4:35,

אתה הראת לדעת כי יהוה הוא האלהים אין עוד מלבדו

“You have been shown, in order to know that the Lord He is God; there is none else besides Him.”

Table 2. The gimmatriya, the word ‘אָדָּד’

Letter	Numeric Value	Meaning
א	1	God’s oneness
ד	8	Seven heavens and earth
ד	4	Four corners of the earth

According to the Rishonim, the word ‘אָדָּד’ further articulates that God is One in the seven heavens and on the earth. As per the gimmatriya, the numerical value and meaning of the letters contained in the word ‘אָדָּד’ are shown (Table 2).

The Torah, *Written Law*<sup>7</sup> and the legal commentary on the Torah, *Oral Law* are the most authoritative texts of Judaism. For centuries, the Oral Law was taught by Jewish scholars and transmitted orally. Eventually, Rabi Judah HaNasi, and due to his great stature also known as HaKodosh, fearing that the Oral Law would be forgotten, had it written down in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AC, and with time, the ‘משנה’ - Mishna became systematically codified in sixty-three tractates, called *Mishna*. Yet, one of its sixty-three tractates contains no laws at all; It is called ‘פרקי אבות’ - *Pirkei Avot* (Ethics of the Fathers), and records the most famous sayings and proverbs of the rabbis.

<sup>7</sup> Torah, Number of Words and Letters:

Torah Books	Number of Words	Number of Letters
Bereshit (Genesis)	20,512	78,064
Shemot ( <a href="#">Exodus</a> )	16,723	63,529
Vayikra (Leviticus)	11,950	44,790
Bamidbar ( <a href="#">Numbers</a> )	16,368	63,530
Devarim ( <a href="#">Deuteronomy</a> )	14,294	54,892
<b>Total</b>	<b>79,847</b>	<b>304,805</b>

Following Rabbi Judah's editing of the Mishna, it was studied by successive generations of rabbis who wrote down their discussions and commentaries on the Mishna's laws in a series of books known as the *Talmud*. The rabbis of Palestine edited their discussions of the Mishna and their work became known as the Jerusalem Talmud or *Talmud Yerushalmi*, 'תלמוד ירושלמי'. More than a century later, leading Babylonian rabbis compiled another editing of the discussions on the Mishna. The Babylon edition was far more extensive than its Palestinian counterpart. Therefore, the Babylonian Talmud, *Talmud Bavli* became central to Rabbinic Judaism and is considered as the most authoritative compilation of the Oral Law. When the study of Talmud is mentioned today, it usually refers to the Talmud Bavli rather than the Talmud Yerushalmi.

The Talmud's discussions are recorded in a consistent format. A law from the Mishna is cited and followed by rabbinic deliberations from *Gemara* on its meaning. The *Mishna* and the rabbinic discussions, *Gemara* 'גמרא' comprise the Talmud, although in the present times, the terms *Gemara* and Talmud usually are used interchangeably. The rabbis whose views are cited in the Mishna are known as *Tanna'im*, Aramaic for 'teachers, while the rabbis quoted in the *Gemara* are known as *Amora'im*, 'interpreters'. Because the *Tanna'im* lived earlier than the *Amora'im*, and thus were in closer proximity to the Revelation at Sinai, their teachings are considered more authoritative than those of the *Amora'im*. For the same reason, Jewish tradition generally regards the teachings of the *Amora'im*, insofar as they are expounding the Oral Law, as more authoritative than contemporary rabbinic teachings. In addition to extensive legal discussions (Hebrew *halakha*), the rabbis incorporated into the Talmud non-legalistic exegetical texts of the classical rabbinic literature of Judaism, particularly as recorded in the Talmud and Midrash, including their guidance on ethical matters, medical advice, historical information, and folklore, together known as 'aggadata', Aramaic 'אגדה' (Telushkin, 1991).

### 2.1.2 Christianity

The most authoritative text of Christianity is the New Testament Gospels, followed by the Apostolic Epistles, with the Old Testament being accepted as the Revelation of God. The Gospels and the Epistles were written down about one century after the life of Jesus. A considerable theological difference may be noted between the teachings of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels, and the teachings of Paul, as recorded in the Epistles. In the opinion of the author, this difference among the early Christians became the impetus concerning the origin, nature and relationship of Jesus to God, the Father.

To reconcile this Christological issue, Roman Emperor Constantine I convoked the first ecumenical council of bishops of the Roman Empire in Nicaea, present-day Turkey, in 325 AC, in an order to unify canons of doctrinal orthodoxy and define a common creed for the Church. This resulted in the first uniform Christian doctrine. While it is commonly assumed that the Symbolum Nicaenum, the Nicene Creed, Greek: Σύμβολον τῆς Νικαίας or, τῆς πίστεως, that asserted monotheism being central to Christianity, is the result of this Council, it actually first appears in its complete form in the Anconatus of Epiphanius of Salamis in 374 AC and the Acts of the second ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381 AC. As it is known in its present form, the Creed was rewritten at this Council, and its amended form is referred to as the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Creed begins with the monotheistic declaration, "Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἓνα Θεὸν" (Table 3).

**Table 3. Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed in Greek, English and Latin Languages**

<p>Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα ποιητὴν οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὁρατῶν τε πάντων καὶ ἀορατῶν· καὶ εἰς ἕνα Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν 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 Πατρὶ, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο· τὸν δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ διὰ τὴν ἡμετέραν σωτηρίαν κατελθόντα ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν, καὶ σαρκωθέντα ἐκ Πνεύματος Ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου, καὶ ἐνανθρωπήσαντα, σταυρωθέντα τε ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου, καὶ παθόντα, καὶ ταφέντα, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ κατὰ τὰς γραφάς, καὶ ἀνελθόντα εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς, καὶ καθεζόμενον ἐν δεξιᾷ τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ πάλιν ἐρχόμενον μετὰ δόξης κρῖναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς, οὗ τῆς βασιλείας οὐκ ἔσται τέλος· καὶ εἰς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ Ἅγιον, τὸ Κύριον καὶ Ζωοποιόν, τὸ ἐκ τοῦ Πατρὸς ἐκπορευόμενον, τὸ σὺν Πατρὶ καὶ Υἱῷ συμπροσκυνούμενον καὶ συνδοξαζόμενον, τὸ λαλῆσαν διὰ τῶν προφητῶν· εἰς μίαν ἁγίαν καθολικὴν καὶ ἀποστολικὴν ἐκκλησίαν· ὁμολογοῦμεν ἕν βάπτισμα εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν· προσδοκῶμεν ἀνάστασιν νεκρῶν, καὶ ζωὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος αἰῶνος. Ἀμήν.</p>	<p>We<sup>9</sup> believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible; And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into existence, Who because of us men and because of our salvation came down from the heavens, and was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became man, and was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried, and rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures and ascended to heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father, and will come again with glory to judge living and dead, of Whose kingdom there will be no end; And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and life-giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who with the Father and the Son is together worshipped and together glorified, Who spoke through the prophets; in one holy Catholic and apostolic Church. We confess one baptism to the remission of sins; we look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen</p>	<p>Credimus in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem, factorem coeli et terrae, visibilium omnium et invisibilium, et in unum Dominum Jesum Christum, Filium Dei unicum, de Patre natum ante omnia saecula; Deum verum de Deo vero; natum, non factum; ejusdemque substantiae qua Pater est; per quem omnia facta sunt; qui propter nos homines et propter nostram salutem descendit, incarnatus est de Spiritu sancto, in Maria virgine homo factus, crucifixus pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato, sepultus, resurrexit tertia die, ascendit ad coelos, sedet ad dexteram Patris; inde venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos ac mortuos, cujus regni non erit finis. Et in Spiritum sanctum, Dominum ac vivificantem a Patre procedentem, qui cum Patre et Filio adoratur et glorificatur, qui locutus est per Prophetas; in unam catholicam atque apostolicam Ecclesiam. Confitemur unum baptismum in remissionem peccatorum; speramus resurrectionem mortuorum, vitam futuri saeculi. Amen.</p>
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The Nicene Creed is the 'Symbol Christian of Faith'. In Greek and Latin, the word 'symbol' means a 'token of identification (by comparison with a counterpart)'.<sup>8</sup>

### 2.1.3 Islam

Tawhid is the defining doctrine of Islam. It declares the absolute monotheism, the unity and uniqueness of God as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and constitutes the foremost article of the profession of faith.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

The Arabic word 'Tawhid' توحيد, means 'Oneness [of God]'. God is singular - Tawhid توحيد, unique - Wahid واحد and inherently One - Ahad احد. Al-Ahad and Al-Wahid are two of the Names and Attributes of Allah. Both have the same meaning and yet they are distinct. The Holy Book of Islam, the Quran, the final revelation of God which corrects the corruptions that had entered into earlier revelations and revealed to the last Prophet Mohammad (saw) states,

وَاللَّهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

"And your God is One God; there is no god save Him, the Beneficent, the Merciful." (Sūrah al-Baqarah: 163)

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

<sup>8</sup> The versions used by Oriental Orthodoxy and the Church of the East differ from the Greek liturgical version in having "We believe", as in the original text, instead of "I believe".

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

“Say: *He is Allah, the One.*” (Sūrah al-Ikhlās)

In the first of these verses, Allah is referred to as ‘al-Wāhid’, whereas in the second verse, He is referred to as al-Ahad. The etymological origin of both Names is the same. The word wāhid is the Arabic word for the number “one”. Here, it refers to Allah being the One and Only God. It also refers to His being the First, before Whom nothing existed. This in turn, communicates that no one deserves to be worshipped besides Allah, and that He has no partner in His divinity. The word ‘al-Ahad’, by contrast, conveys an uncountable oneness. It is not one in a series. It cannot be numbered, added to or divided into fractions. Its stands for a unique singularity. In Arabic grammatical usage, the word ‘أحد’ also distinguishes one from others (Sūrah al-Ikhlās 112:4).

Sheikh Musa bin Babaway al Qummi, says,

*“God is unique, and there is none who could bear a resemblance to Him. He is unchanged from eternity and would remain the same till infinity. He listens without ears and sees without eyes and encompasses everything... He is free of all the sordid characteristics of His creatures; and He is unbound by a simile or denial i.e. we cannot negate Him of wisdom and knowledge nor can compare Him to His creatures in those faculties. In His being, He is a thing but not like those which are around us. He is inimitable, alone and self-sufficient. He has neither begotten anyone, who could claim His succession nor has He descended from someone else with whom He could be associated in person and his attributes. He is incomparable without a rival and there is none to resemble Him. He neither has a wife nor a companion and therefore, He is exclusive and matchless. In short, He is only one of its kinds in all aspects of attributes and assign. He is so subtle that eyes cannot sense Him in both the worlds, but He can identify every angle of what the eyes visualize. He is so exalted that human thought cannot have an access to His station, but He is always aware of the thoughts of His servants. He neither sleeps nor slumbers. He has created all things and only He is worthy of worship.” (Al-Qummi, 2012)*

Islam is the embryonic religion of humankind because all the prophets, from the first to the last, from Adam (as) to Muhammad (saw), have taught the same doctrine of God’s unity. The Holy Book of Islam, the Quran states,

أَمَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا تُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَتَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

*“We have faith in God, and in what has been sent down to us, and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus were given, and the prophets, from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.” (Qur’an, Al-Imran 3:84)*

## 2.2 The Differences between Abrahamic Religions

Although polytheism has been widespread throughout the ancient Jewish history, Judaism, as a whole, has affirmed monotheism. Christianity emerged out of Jewish monotheism, and its Doctrine of the Trinity compromised its monotheism and divided the Christian Church into sects, of which one end of the spectrum ascribes a divine nature to Jesus, and the opposite end of the spectrum ascribes him a human nature, with the Christian Councils of the fourth and fifth centuries taking the middle position and declaring Jesus to be the ‘Eternal Word of God’ who assumed human nature.

The teachings of Islam differ to those of the present-day Christianity which only takes into consideration the happiness in the Hereafter and ignores this world’s prosperity. Neither are the teachings of Islam like the present day Judaism that is reserves itself to a small ethnic group. Islam considers prosperity as a necessity in this world as well as hereafter for all God’s creation at all times and places. Realistic beliefs, on top of which is the Oneness of the Almighty Allah, have been selected and considered as the basis and foundation of the Islamic religion (Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1989).

**Table 4.** The Summary of Major Differences between Abrahamic Religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam

	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
<b>Adherents</b>	Jews	Christians	Muslims
<b># Adherents (2018)</b>	13 Million	2.3 Billion	1.6 Billion
<b>Fertility Rate (2010-</b>	2.3	2.7	3.1
<b>Etymologic Origin</b>	From Hebrew: Yehudim,	From Greek: Christos,	From Arabic: Salaam, 'peace'.
<b>Original Language</b>	Hebrew	Aramaic, Greek and Latin	Arabic
<b>Prophetic Revelation</b>	Moses (as)	Jesus Christ (as)	Mohammed (saw)
<b>Geographic Origin</b>	Southern Levant (Israel, Palestine, and Jordan)	Southern Levant (Israel, Palestine, and Jordan)	Arabian Peninsula
<b>Main Sects</b>	Ethnic: Chassidic, Ashkenazi, Sephardi; Denominational: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform	Orthodox, Roman Catholic (c. 1054), Protestant (c. 1500's)	Sunni, Shia, Sufi
<b>God</b>	One God (יהוה)	One God and Doctrine of	One God (الله)
<b>Holy Book</b>	Torah	Bible	Quran
<b>Secondary Authoritative Writings</b>	Talmud	Church Fathers and Ecumenical Councils	Hadith
<b>Law</b>	Halakha	Cannon Law	Sharia
<b>View of Judaism</b>	True Religion	Monotheistic Religion, Incomplete Revelation	People of the Book
<b>View of Christianity</b>	False expansion of Judaism	True Religion	People of the Book
<b>View of Islam</b>	False expansion of Judaism	Monotheistic Religion, Prophethood of Mohammad	True Religion

### 3 CONCLUSION

Islam with its uncompromising monotheism at the heart of its Aqedah distinguishes itself from other Semitic religions. However, it may be said that Tawhid is akin to the monotheistic concept of God in Judaism as declared in the Shema,

“שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד”

Tawhid is also analogous to the monotheistic declaration in the Christian Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed which begins with the monotheistic declaration,

“Πιστεύομεν εἰς ἕνα Θεόν”

However, Islamic monotheism rejects the Christian Doctrine of Trinity as well as the polytheism that appeared throughout the history of the Jewish religion, along with the Jewish religion's exclusivity to a small ethnic group.

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