

## **Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?**

Sunday Evening Bible Study

January 31, 2016

### **Wheaton Professor Larycia Hawkins Says Yes**

*"I stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like me, a Christian, are people of the book...And as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God."*

### **Exec. Dir., Center for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), Nihad Awad, Says Yes**

*"It is clear that Wheaton College has the right to its own theological stance on the nature of God, but from an Islamic perspective, there is only one deity worshiped by Muslims, Christians and Jews. In fact, the Muslim declaration of faith (shahada) states: 'There is no god but God.'"*

### **Baylor Professor, Francis J. Beckwith Says Yes, By Way of This Analogy**

1. Premise A1: Fred believes evidence that Thomas Jefferson had children with Sally Hemmings.
2. Premise A2: Bob does not believe that Thomas Jefferson had children with Sally Hemmings.
3. Conclusion: But they both believe that Thomas Jefferson and the 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the United States is the same man.
  
4. Premise B1: Paul believes the evidence that God is triune (one God who exists as three persons).
5. Premise B2: Abraham does not believe the evidence that God is triune
6. Conclusion: But they can both believe that the God described in the OT and NT are the same God.
  
7. Inference: Mohammed and his followers (Muslims) are like Abraham: they worship the same God as Christians even though they don't believe in the trinity. "The fact that one may have incomplete knowledge or hold a false belief about another person—whether human or divine—does not mean that someone who has better or truer knowledge about that person is not thinking about the same person." (<http://www.thecatholicthing.org/2015/12/17/do-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god/>)

### **Beckwith's Problem is Premise B2**

1. It was not revealed to Abraham that God is triune; the incarnation was a mystery hinted at in the OT but not fully revealed (1 Tim. 3:16; Eph. 1:9; 6:19; Col. 1:26,27).
2. Paul and Abraham were not presented with the same evidence (John 20:30-31; Ro. 4:24).
3. If Abraham was presented with the same evidence as Paul, he would have believed God is triune.
4. We know this because Jesus said so:
  - 4.1 No one can truly worship the Father while rejecting the Son (John 8:19)
  - 4.2 True children of Abraham are those who receive Jesus as God (Jn. 8:29-59).
  - 4.3 Abraham believed all the evidence that was presented to him and did not reject it (Jn. 8:56)
  - 4.4 Abraham believes right now that Jesus is God (Jn 8:56-58; Mt. 22:31-32).
5. When Muslims are presented with the evidence that God is triune and don't believe it, it is proof they do not worship the same God that Abraham, Paul, or Christians worship (Jn. 8:42).
6. Inference: When someone describes another person in a way that is at complete odds with the description another person gives on the most fundamental and integral traits of that person, they are likely not thinking about the same person.

### The Analogy Should Look Like This

Fred	Bob
Knows a man named Thomas Jefferson (TJ)	Knows a man named Thomas Jefferson (TJ)
TJ is from Virginia	TJ is not from Virginia
TJ founded UVA.	TJ did not found UVA.
TJ was principal author of the Declaration	TJ was not principal author of the Declaration
TJ was the third president of the United States	TJ was not the third president of the US.

The most reasonable explanation: Fred and Bob are not thinking about the same person. Similarly,

<b>The Christian Knows a Being Named God</b>	<b>The Muslim Knows a Being Named God</b>
God: God has a son, Jesus, who is fully God.	God does not have a son, Jesus is not God.
Grave: God raised Jesus from the dead.	God did not raise Jesus from the dead.
Grace: God saves us by grace alone.	God does not save by grace alone.
Growth: God prohibits conversion by holy war	God does not prohibit conversion by holy war.

The most reasonable explanation: Christians and Muslims are not thinking about the same God, and since there is only one God, there are only three options:

A: Muslims worship the true God and Christians worship an imaginary and counterfeit God.

B: Christians worship the true God and Muslims worship an imaginary and counterfeit God.

C: Both Muslims and Christians worship an imaginary and counterfeit God.

But it cannot be the case that both Christians and Muslims worship the true God.

### Some Concluding Observations

1. Christians do have common ground we should acknowledge:
  - 1.1 There is one God.
  - 1.2 Jesus is a miracle-working prophet of God.
  - 1.3 God has spoken to us through written revelation.
  - 1.4 God has given absolute moral laws he expects us to obey.
  - 1.5 God wants us to care for the poor.
  - 1.6 There will be a future and final judgment.
  - 1.7 Jesus is coming again.
  - 1.8 *If you are a Christian, you do not have to believe that all the other religions are simply wrong all through...But, of course, being a Christian does mean thinking that where Christianity differs from other religions, Christianity is right and they are wrong.* –C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*.
2. Jesus and his apostles warned Christians about people claiming revelation from God through angels 600 years before Mohammed was born (Mt. 7:15; 24:11; Gal. 1:8; 1 Jn. 4:1; 2 Pet. 2:1; 2 Cor. 11:14).
3. While Muslims are not our brothers (Jn. 1:12; 8:42), they are our neighbors who are made in the image of God and whom God commands us to love (Gal. 5:14).
4. We can make good friends among the millions of “Mecca Muslims,” and we should work together for peace, tolerance, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech (Ro. 12:18–21).
5. Even though “Medina Muslims” are our enemies, we still must love them (Mt. 5:44).
6. Love requires that we pray for them (Lk. 6:28), serve them (Mk. 10:45), and be willing to risk our money (Phil. 1:5), and our lives (Phil. 1:21) to speak the truth to them (Eph. 4:15).
7. When we see that Muslims have been deceived by the Father of lies, we can have compassion on them, knowing that we would be where they are except by grace. God loves terrorists! (Mt. 9:36; Rev. 12:9; Phil. 3:6; 1 Cor. 15:10).