

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

SOTERIOLOGY IN MAINSTREAM MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS:
THE MESSIAH CONUNDRUM

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Liberty School of Divinity
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS IN GLOBAL STUDIES: CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES

BY

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ABSTRACT

SOTERIOLOGY IN MAINSTREAM MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS: THE MESSIAH CONUNDRUM

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For the promotion of the Gospel, this study seeks to examine *Soteriology in Mainstream Monotheistic Religions: The Messiah Conundrum*. This decidedly charged topic critically researches the philosophy of salvation doctrine, or soteriology, within major monotheistic religions. The highlighted problem is the Messiah conundrum, with critical research on each doctrine for epistemological significance of a savior and their beliefs surrounding salvation. This mystery of where, or who humans turn to for salvation, is vitally important when considering the principle of sufficient reason in today's hermeneutic and apologetic circles. The purpose fueling this thesis is the resolute documenting of beliefs of major monotheistic religions and their sub-categories, and where, if any, each correlates with salvation in Christ Jesus. The thesis Scripture verse is clear, "there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12, ESV). The current impassioned discussions within politics, churches, academia, homes, and in local marketplaces around the world, questions of which religion is true, and if there is really salvation in only one spiritual figure? The major monotheistic religions researched include: Christianity with sub-categories of Protestantism, Catholicism, and Messianic Gentiles; Islam both moderate and extreme; and Judaism where the divisions are Rabbinic, liberal, and Messianic. Additional sections will include stories of conversion, and critically look at answering questions, such as: Can there actually be only one Messiah?; Was Jesus really just a great teacher?; Do all roads lead to God?—as Interfaithism touts; and What is the view of Jesus Christ as the One True Living Messiah from the multi-faith perspective? The conclusion provides a summation of research and results.

DEDICATION/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to the many Christian missionaries and sharers of the Gospel who spend countless hours learning another culture and language for the furtherance of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. My prayer for every reader of this thesis is that they gain a better understanding of how to reach the lost and broken in other religions to glorify and magnify our Lord.

To my Mentor, Dr. Jones Kaleli, and Reader, Dr. Porfirio Rodriguez, and Chair, Dr. Frampton Fox, thank you for all your hard work and prayers. This team worked tirelessly on assisting me to produce a work product that we all could be proud of at Liberty, and in the harvest field.

To my mother Marcia, who instilled in me a drive to accomplish my goals and a love for our Savior, Yahshua Messiah. Thank you, mom, for your unconditional love, unending support, daily encouragement, prayers that kept me safe, and love and care that matched none other.

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Introduction

If students of theology are to accurately and fairly represent the doctrinal positions of other religions within theological research and inquiry, then it is incumbent upon them to grasp and appreciate the paradigm of the theology they study and present.¹ In that light, this thesis has researched soteriology within monotheism by implementing critical epistemological standards and a qualitative research design. The central research question asked is if all roads lead to God, with secondary questions referring to each religion's explanation of salvation, and exploration of the central phenomenon of all religions claiming exclusivity of salvation. This researcher poses this question, consistent with the existing knowledge and methodology of qualitative research,² and a holistic attempt to advance a complex problem involving multiple perspectives and identifying the many factors involved in developing the larger picture that emerges.³ The method presented in this thesis should lead to lessons taught to students, missionaries, and educators, because "changes in education will not, by themselves, solve our problems."⁴ The methodologies aforementioned will assist in precipitating a more informed, more sophisticated consensus construction,⁵ thus producing a better knowledge of the topic and its related subfields, through both critical theory and constructivism.⁶

¹ Steven K. Mittwede, "Research Paradigms and Their Use and Importance in Theological Inquiry and Education," *Journal of Education & Christian Belief* 16, no. 1 (2012): 33 *Religion and Philosophy Collection*, accessed February 19, 2018 <https://doi.org/10.1177/205699711201600104>.

² John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publishing, 2014), 139.

³ Creswell, *Research Design*, 186.

⁴ C. P. Snow, 1963, p. 91 in Mittwede, "Research Paradigms and Their Use and Importance in Theological Inquiry and Education."

⁵ Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 111 in *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

Chapter One

Researching the Problem and Thesis Topic

The problem addressed in this research is the decidedly charged topic of many roads claiming to lead to God and the philosophy of salvation within the three largest monotheistic religions, highlighting a Messianic conundrum and the critical epistemological significance of only one savior.⁷

Purpose of Thesis and Reason for Topic

The purpose fueling this thesis is the resolute documenting of the salvation beliefs of the three major monotheistic religions, and where, if any, each correlates with the Biblical Doctrine of Salvation in Christ alone (Acts 4:12). The highlighted problem is found within current local and global scenes is the impassioned discussions within the framework of politics, academia, marketplaces, homes and churches, as to which religion is true? Each religion holds to the belief that theirs is the path to truth and salvation. Such a belief begs deeper analysis of this single phenomenon to be explored and better understood, while recognizing that this research may evolve into an exploration of comparisons and intertwined relationships among varying ideas.⁸ Nabhan-Warren speaks to this objective as an important move for researchers to “abandon our privileging of what constitutes knowledge and information and to widen our perspectives on epistemological inquiry and empiricism.”⁹ The purpose of taking epistemological and phenomenological approaches together in this thesis, is to better define religious beliefs and expression to better understand how and why people cling to important doctrines and deeply-

⁷ Creswell, *Research Design*, 113-15.

⁸ Ibid., 123-24.

⁹ Kristy Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing: A Case for Phenomenologically Oriented Religious Studies Ethnographies," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 2 (2011): 378-407, accessed February 10, 2018 from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23020431>.

held beliefs, e.g. salvation in one person or concept alone.¹⁰ This begs the importance to clearly identify truth in religion and the need to discover if there is salvation in only one spiritual figure, or do all paths lead to God?

Importance of Thesis Research

As a Christian for 38 years, the number of conversations about who's faith is correct and who has the monopoly on the salvation message ranges in the thousands, qualifying me to understand the issue of salvation doctrine, in my faith and in others. "We cannot properly beware of philosophy unless we are aware of philosophy."¹¹ One of our generations most somber problems for evangelical exegetes, is many choose not to be philosophically sophisticated, and fail to learn the doctrines of the other-than-Christian beliefs that nest in unfamiliar presuppositions beneath the surface of their discipline. It is important for missionaries and congregants alike, to invest time and be aware of philosophy, for if not, they will not know how to fulfill Paul's admonition in to beware of philosophy.¹² "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8 ESV).¹³

Savage and others have correctly identified that churches where clergy, ministry teams, and members interact in open and authentic ways, and are able to face and resolve conflicts, are noticeably rare.¹⁴ While the effectiveness of a church's teaching ministry has some degree of

¹⁰ Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing."

¹¹ Norman L. Geisler, "Beware of Philosophy: A Warning to Biblical Scholars," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 42, no. 1 (03, 1999): 3+, accessed March 3, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/211329371?accountid=12085>.

¹² Geisler, "Beware of Philosophy: A Warning to Biblical Scholars," 18.

¹³ Bible Gateway, accessed March 2, 2018 <https://www.biblegateway.com>.

¹⁴ Sara B. Savage, "Doing Pastoral Theology through Empirical Research," *British Journal of Theological Education* 13, no. 1 (2002): 51, Religion and Philosophy Collection, accessed February 19, 2018 from EBSCOhost.

independence from collective human sin, churches are ultimately constrained by their lack of collective knowledge of other salvation doctrines. The positive effects of this thesis on religious discourse, as well as the cognitive processes of understanding the truth behind salvation doctrines, will bear fruit by beginning to answer the question for each believer and the church, “Do all paths lead to God?”¹⁵

Limitations of Research

The research to support this thesis on salvation doctrines, is limited to Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, and includes each of their sub-categories, but does not incorporate the doctrines of polytheism, universalism, or secularism, such as Hinduism, Humanism, or Taoism. The ethnographies and cultural narratives are researched and documented from existing conversations, articles, biographies, and dialogue in cultural anthropology books, and stories of conversions from Islam, Catholicism, and Judaism to Evangelical Christianity. This is a slight variation from new qualitative sources and the interview review process from academic scholars. My initial assumptions are that research on each religion provides unequivocal arguments that theirs is the true salvation path, or savior, or that all paths ultimately lead to God.

¹⁵ Savage, "Doing Pastoral Theology through Empirical Research." We are in conflict when two opposing salvation doctrines both claim exclusive right to truth.

Chapter Two

Method of Study

The method of research for thesis topic is qualitative, employing the elements of phenomenological findings, ethnographic narratives, and epistemological themes. As part of the research scheme, the researcher remains focused on learning the meanings of religious salvation doctrines while actively looking for evidence to support positions: To create compare and contrast findings; To comment on the relationship between researcher and participant(s); and To research studies without undue influence on researcher's interpretation.¹ One of the keys of qualitative research is to gather from ethnographies and narratives that address the research as new information dictates.²

Research Method Utilized

The method of research is qualitative, including the gathering of data, data analysis, and carefully reflecting on the researcher's role in the study, while drawing from various types of data sources.³ Specific protocols were used to record data, mechanisms infused to insure the accuracy and validity of the data collected, and indicating the potential outcomes of study, while guarding against research bias.⁴ John Creswell nimbly abridges the qualitative paradigms as having a matrix of ontological, rhetorical, epistemological, axiological, and methodological conventions, providing a framework for information-based research.⁵ The idea behind qualitative research is to select participants that will best help to understand the problem and the research

¹ Creswell, *Research Design*, 188.

² *Ibid.*, 187.

³ *Ibid.*, 183-84.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Creswell, 1994, 4-5 in Mittwede, "Research Paradigms and Their Use and Importance in Theological Inquiry and Education," 24.

question.⁶ The historic account of Christian salvation can be found in Acts 4:10-12,⁷ providing the basis point from which all eternal salvation is measured: “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, [this] is the stone which was set at nought [sic] of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (KJV).

Reasons Supporting Qualitative Design

Investigative and descriptive study on monotheistic world religions under the qualitative research method is the best approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social and human issue of salvation. This qualitative process of research involves emerging questions from data collected, while data analysis inductively builds from doctrinal into general religious themes.⁸ From data collected and themes discovered, the researcher makes interpretation and meaning of the data, thus inviting a form of inquiry that supports this research method and honors an inductive style focus on individual meaning. Qualitative research always occurs in social, historical, political, or in this case, a religious environment;⁹ however, findings may fall prey to qualitative generalization.¹⁰ Issues of qualitative generalization and research bias has no place in this thesis as a direct result of research guidelines and writing standards as set by the authors utilized by this researcher.

⁶ Creswell, *Research Design*, 189-90.

⁷ Open Bible, accessed March 4, 2018 www.openbible.com.

⁸ Creswell, *Research Design*, 4.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 203.

Process of Research

As with most qualitative research, this researcher collects data manually through examining books from establish and trusted authors, appraising plentiful articles on salvation doctrines, pouring over existing interviews with religious leaders, anthropologic relationships with other cultures and religions, and gathering other multiple forms of data; such as religious documents, audio transcripts, and videos.¹¹ Information assembled underwent both inductive and deductive data analysis, working between data sources and evolving themes, until this researcher has established a comprehensive set of schemes.¹² Themes from data are deductively scrutinized to determine if enough evidence can support each thesis point.¹³

Creswell lays out a checklist for qualitative procedures and summarization.¹⁴ The research question herein is not one that answers the question simplistically, but is one that helps understand the much larger issue.¹⁵ It is said that a researchers most valuable ability is in being puzzled by ordinary things, seeing what is out of place.¹⁶ Analytical reading is required with much to read and little time to do read it; so understanding how to practice discriminating reading is of utmost importance.¹⁷ The key with written data is to extract the vital data with the

¹¹ Quetzil E. Castañeda, "The Invisible Theatre of Ethnography: Performative Principles of Fieldwork," *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 1 (Winter, 2006): 75-104, accessed February 3, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/216475964?accountid=12085>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

¹⁴ Ibid., 183-84.

¹⁵ Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research, Thesis, and Dissertations* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 13.

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷ William B. Badke, *Research Strategies: Finding Your Way Through the Information Fog*, 5th ed. (Bloomington: iUniverse, 2014), 195.

greatest speed and efficiency yet read enough to get the author's overall message.¹⁸ This researcher attempted to locate potential gaps in information, as well as commonalities in salvation theory, for the purpose of finding a bridge to share Christ as Savior.

Ethnographic Essentials

Ethnographic fieldwork from those who have preceded this researcher, was reviewed for the value of how this research methodology consents an entree into the religions being studied herein. To be able to hear directly from someone who has been engulfed in another faith, and then wrote about it, is optimal.¹⁹ These experiences of missionaries and brave Christians are lived, emotive, and embodied, so that their direct, and later indirect findings and narratives, can be used to benefit many, and leads to discovering a better and more clear understanding into their religions.²⁰ This concept of ethnographic methodology in research should not be something that is an afterthought; it should be the very basis by which solid fieldwork is done, and is the element used to pursue insightful data about salvation within other religions.²¹

Narratives

Narratives throughout this thesis originate from phenomenological reports from prevailing ethnography so as to more clearly understand a group of people in one accord concerning their salvation doctrine. Throughout, the central research question is; Do all roads lead to God?²² Creswell lays out the core characteristics qualitative research narratives: Taking

¹⁸ Badke, *Research Strategies*.

¹⁹ Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing: A Case for Phenomenologically Oriented Religious Studies Ethnographies," 383-85. Only a person who has the first-hand experience, who shared meals with their interlocutors, to engage in direct dialogue, to share in their daily joy and grief—is anything but abstract, intellectualized knowledge and experience.

²⁰ Andrew Mauss, 1968 in *Ibid*.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² Creswell, *Research Design*, 141.

study up close and personal; and Information gathered by actual talking directly to people of another faith and seeing them act and behave within their religious context or structure.²³

Delimitations of Research

This qualitative research is restricted to those resources that are pre-existing, in written or audio form, and does not include new interviews or further field investigation.²⁴ The researcher focuses on the many experiences of those who have been missionaries, pastors, converts, and cultural anthropologists. The concept of emergent audience can still be utilized as it goes beyond the accustomed questions of religious research and delves into more practical belief factors. The work of prior field workers has great meaning and value as ethnography.²⁵ This research does not include symbol-based anthropologies or alternative paradigms, but on the emergence of audiences as the privileged locus of the value of ethnography.²⁶

Limitations of Field Data

For this portion of the thesis proposal process, it has been discussed and agreed upon, that no current interviews or religious contact be made with leaders or congregants of other religions. Traditionally audiences emerge in the theaters of ethnographic fieldwork, spectators who choose to observe, listen, interact, dialogue, engage, and disengage with the activity in the very moment of its enactment.²⁷ Additionally, the many aspects of religious practice, i.e. worship practices, dietary guidelines, dress codes, and building architecture for example, though they are fascinating, are not a part of the research in this thesis.

²³ Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

²⁴ Castañeda, "The Invisible Theatre of Ethnography," 85.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 83-84.

Multiple Bible Versions and Commentaries

A thoroughly developed thesis utilizes multiple Bible versions and Biblical commentaries to provide the best and most accurate hermeneutic meaning to the study topic.²⁸ This thesis utilized: Coogan's *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (NRSV), 3rd ed. highlighting Greek, Hebrew, and English; *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible* (KJV) with an impressive concordance; Clinton's *The Soul Care Bible*, (NKJV); New International Reader's Version online; and *The Message* online. Second level research includes: *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*; Thomas's Holeman *Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (NASV) with Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Dictionaries; and Smith's *Christianity and Libraries: A Selective Bibliography* (2008). Articles like "Research Paradigms" provides options by giving an analysis of four major research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism; all of which has been applied effectively in recent theological inquiry. These four are essentially matrices of deeply held assumptions, or conceptual frameworks, that undergird and guide research, in this case, a qualitative theological method.²⁹

Books, Journals, and Online Sources

The choice of academic books, online sources, and peer-reviewed journals on this topic is crucial to the validity of the research, as well as the outcome. Some of these select works include: *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Truth*; *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*; *Christianity and Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Global Age*; "Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal of the Doctrine of Salvation" in *Open Journal of Philosophy*; www.ChristianCourier.com; and "The Cross and Salvation:

²⁸ J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hayes, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 293-94.

²⁹ Mittwede, "Research Paradigms and Their Use and Importance in Theological Inquiry and Education," 32.

Foundations of Evangelical Theology: The Doctrine of Salvation" *Trinity Journal* 21. Authors that contributed greatly to thesis research include: Creswell, Netland, and Vyhmeister

Hermeneutic Study of Key Words and Terms

To bring a deeper cogitative understanding to this research are some select books and articles to assist in the analysis of key terms and words, to form a proper hermeneutic basis for this thesis. This search also uncovered a more disturbing reality that led this researcher to the works by Heidegger, setting forth the premise that the true meaning of a term is found in etymology.³⁰ In doing so, Heidegger set the stage for the so-called new hermeneutic of Ott, Ebling, Bultmann, and Gadamer, but also the foundation for alternative explanations of theological terms.³¹ This troubling premise is one that many researchers fall prey to.³² This is an important distinction, knowing how to, and how not to partake in etymology. To this point, Geisler upholds, that “one cannot help but be reminded of Paul's exhortation to beware of philosophy,” herein, the philosophy of phenomenology as it relates to accurate word meanings.³³

Reflexivity of Researcher's Interpretation

Reflexivity is an attitude of attending systematically to the context of knowledge, especially to the effect of the researcher, at every step of the research process. Incorporating personified ways of knowing research data, via existing reports, opens up vast possibilities for ethnographic research and writing in the field of religious studies, assisting in greater attention to knowledge that can lead to a more complete understanding of the religious worlds³⁴ as we study

³⁰ Geisler, "Beware of Philosophy," 10, Heidegger's *Being and Time* and *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., contends three things: the origin of a term is the key to its meaning;

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing: A Case for Phenomenologically Oriented Religious Studies Ethnographies," 383-85.

and seek to understand. Each researcher brings a worldview to the research, and this researcher has a pragmatic worldview, one that arises from situations and consequences in concert with a concern for applications that work. This pragmatic looks at the what and how of research, based on the intended consequences of results, and keeping interpreter biases at bay.³⁵ In being reflexive of past experiences, there have been many encounters, each one of these in street witnessing, work environments, professional meetings, and more. This past personal experience with the research problem and participant populations, assist in writer understanding, and building a connection between the researcher and the study, and yet minimizing biases.³⁶

My final meditation on understanding research is best expressed by an author I recently found; “when we draw on our experiences and observations, then we are truly writing empirically based scholarship. When we take a reflexive turn in our written work, we can then acknowledge embodiment and connections, and yield greater insight into religion as it is lived.”³⁷ I agree with Core, that one’s perspective of writing ultimately impacts the way we write. “If I approach writing as tedious, stressful and overwhelming, we will write in the same manner. However, if it’s purposeful and intentional, the result will reflect that attitude.”³⁸

Qualitative Data Gathering

Investigative research entails collecting qualitative type documents, including reports, newspapers, public documents, private documents, emails, and personal journals; as well as other qualitative data such as audio, video, and visual materials, website main pages, and visual

³⁵ Creswell, *Research Design*, 10-11.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

³⁷ Deborah Core, *The Seminary Student Writes: Preaching and Its Partners Series* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 56-62.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

ethnography.³⁹ A qualitative researcher checks for predetermined approaches as reliable and valid, while continually documenting procedures taken and steps involved.⁴⁰ Nabhan-Warren suggests focusing on the life-worlds of the interlocutors within the religion(s) studied, rather than the theories brought to the thesis research by interpreter.⁴¹ If one begins with another's life-world, and then ends in theory rather than vice versa, then this can help the researcher avoid over-intellectualizing and/or over-analyzing.⁴² Though many phenomenologists believe that the world as it is known, cannot adequately be put into words, a middle ground can be found in the study of religion with a cognitive, broad-based understanding of what constitutes truth and knowledge, so as to move the conversation in the right direction.⁴³

Data Collection and Documentation

This thesis focuses on multiple sources of data, from books, articles, documents, and from video and media sources. In some cases, data collection has ensued, recording observations in a qualitative manner, with researcher taking notes on the behavior and activities of individuals from a visual source. There also are documents that have been protected and therefore unavailable to public or private access,⁴⁴ and some material required transcribing for computer entry and difficult to interpret; all of which is to be properly collected and documented by organizational means.⁴⁵

³⁹ Creswell, *Research Design*, 190, visual ethnography might include living stories, metaphorical visual narratives, and digital archives.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 203.

⁴² Nabhan-Warren, "Embodied Research and Writing," 383-85.

⁴³ Ibid. This can plague the scholarly work attempted and can cause distance between that which is studied and the researcher.

⁴⁴ D. Jackson 2007: xi in Ibid.

⁴⁵ Creswell, *Research Design*, 190-93.

Data Coding

Qualitative research done correctly documents the steps and procedures of the study, constantly checking and rechecking data to make sure that they do not contain obvious transcription mistakes, or that there is not a drift in the definition of codes, or a shift in the meaning of those codes during the process of coding.⁴⁶ Steps to this effect included reading over all the data and connecting it the overall depth of the topic, bracketing data into categories, and double-checking proper description of detailed information about people, places, and events.⁴⁷

Quality Control

In past roles, quality control has been driven by the core values of this researcher, interpreter, and author, and followed the steps laid out by Creswell,⁴⁸ consistently reviewing and adjusting data coding as needed, and editing work no less than three times in entirety. The quality of this phenomenological thesis lies in the varied narratives, ethnography, and in-depth search to understand a group of people having one mindset. This researcher found questions about salvation evolving and changing during the study in a manner consistent with the assumptions of the qualitative design, and in the best interests of an accurate reporting of topic.⁴⁹

Compare and Contrast Methods of Dissimilar Doctrines

Along with the gathering, organizing, and correlating of data results, there is a sound method to compare and contrast dissimilar religions to the Christian salvation doctrine. This method is a construct that is data inclusive and non-combative with the results kept to facts and quotes only. The religious argument for each is getting complicated and visually polarized.

⁴⁶ Creswell, *Research Design*, 190-91.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 203.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 190-93.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 197-200.

However, this researcher kept in mind the duty of an academic investigator: to take a position firmly behind the legitimacy of data collected within a complex situation and apply a cross-sectional approach which will deal with all sides of this heated topic fairly. The key was to attempt “objectivity at the beginning and doing an analysis at the close.”⁵⁰ Both positive and negative information was reported, because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce discussing contrary data results. In fact, a good researcher presents information that contradicts the general thesis perspective by presenting contradictory evidence, and thus becoming more realistic, more reliable, and more valid.⁵¹

Validity and Reliability of Research

In academic and religious research, validity and reliability take a similar role as they would in scientific study. In writing sections full of data, the researcher must have procedures in place for validating the findings that were undertaken in the study to specifically and consistently check for credibility and accuracy.⁵² In a qualitative thesis such as this one on religious diversity in soteriology, validity means that the researcher has checked for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different sub-topics and thesis sections.⁵³ Therefore, themes were established from converging several different sources of data, or author perspectives, hence assisting in the thesis process, and can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study and the data analysis.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Creswell, *Research Design*, 197-200.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Inductive and Deductive Analysis of Data

Information gathered underwent both deductive and inductive analysis, working with diverse data sources and evolving themes until this researcher had established a wide-ranging set of focused schemes.⁵⁵ To guide in this process was an overview of proper data analysis in Creswell.⁵⁶ In sum, step one organized and prepared data for analysis;⁵⁷ step two looked at all the data for overall depth and credibility;⁵⁸ step three was the coding of the data by category using predetermined codes, and insuring elements were detailed and accurate is step four.⁵⁹ In step five, the researcher advanced the themes in the qualitative narrative,⁶⁰ with the final step six involving an interpretation of the findings results.⁶¹ As a result of said analysis, this led to a possible call for action and reform, or a description in the form of a narrative outcome that questioned or compared opposing ideas or literature on the topic.⁶²

Review of Literature

After months of pouring over my library, downloading appropriate articles, and visiting library reference sections, this researcher can honestly state that the collection of sources listed in the bibliography is one of giving voice to all sides of the question, Do all roads lead to God? Much time has been taken to compile and review the many authors and sources for this thesis,

⁵⁵ Creswell, *Research Design*, 185.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 196-98, Including transcriptions, scanning material, typing notes, cataloging visual material, and sorting and arranging data sources of information as step one.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 197-200.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 200.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Alvin Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2015), 47.

and this researcher stands behind all of them as viable, if not crucial to the thesis problem and the ascribed solutions.

Research Sources

Multiple Bible Versions and Commentaries Utilized. Coogan's *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, 3rd ed. (NRSV), Thompson's *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*. 4th ed., Kings James Version (KJV); Clinton's *The Soul Care Bible*, New King James Version (NKJV); New International Reader's Version (NIRV), online; and The Message (MSG), online. For Bible helps that assist in pondering the best path of understanding, e.g. concordance and commentaries, secondary resources were marshalled for further research, including Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart's, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* 3rd ed.; Thomas's *Holeman Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* New American Standard, Hebrew – Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries; and Gregory A. Smith's "Christianity and Libraries: A Selective Bibliography." Articles like *Research Paradigms*, provided data for my research plan, giving an analysis of four major research paradigms: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, and constructivism; all of which has been applied effectively and recent theological inquiry. These four are essentially matrices of deeply held assumptions or conceptual frameworks that undergird and guide research, in this case, a qualitative, theological method.

Academic books and peer-reviewed journals on this topic, include *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Truth*; by Douglas Groothuis; Dean Halverson's *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*; Harold A. Netland's *Christianity and Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Global Age*; "Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal of the Doctrine of Salvation." By Chiedozie Okoro in the *Open Journal of Philosophy*; and Rob Robinson's "The Cross and Salvation: Foundations of Evangelical Theology: The Doctrine of Salvation" in the *Trinity Journal* 21.

Report of Findings: Conclusion

Writing a qualitative research proposal and identifying all the various qualitative methods should always end with an emerging narrative from the data analysis. The information gathered from this study provided a clearer picture of how other religions, who also strongly believe in one savior or salvation doctrine, consider the position, that Jesus Christ is the only valid *Messiah*. The internal process advanced several viewpoints from results of a qualitative enquiry, and developed descriptions and themes from this data to present these in fairness. Detailed descriptions of settings and individuals using qualitative strategy of review, resulted in providing a phenomenological, not a chronological narrative, of an individual's or group's belief. This detailed portrait of a religious construct came from ethnography and an in-depth analysis of many sources, studying quotes and reading dialogue that reflects the culture of participants, as well as their varied language, culture, and ethnicity.⁶³

⁶³ Creswell, *Research Design*, 204.

Chapter Three

Philosophy of Salvation Doctrine

The Christian standard for salvation philosophy can be expressed as a human condition, one where all have fallen into sin, from which, we require salvation. This salvation is unable to be accomplished by human efforts, it alienates us from God, thus making us unfit for communion with Him.¹ This fallen condition into sin, without salvation, says Plantinga and Mohler, has eternal, cataclysmic consequences on both cognitive and effective states. Our affections are skewed and our hearts harbor evil, cognitive consequences in the knowledge of God and of His grace are being severely compromised, distorting the true image of God.² Salvation is the Hebrew word meaning *Yeshuah*, or *Yahshua*, also means victory and deliverance:³ “Lord, you are the one who saves. May your blessing be on your people.” (Ps. 3:8, NIRV).⁴

Geisler’s “Beware of Philosophy” article is of interest to the thesis, knowing that a culture is useful to applying the right message within the data.⁵ When we study a group of Believers in Paul’s day, e.g. Colosse, can be summarized as a disastrous mix of legalism, asceticism, and mysticism, along with new Christianity.⁶ Every message in Scripture has

¹ Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, 47; A. Rasmusson, “Science as Salvation: George Lakoff and Steven Pinker as Secular Political Theologians,” *Modern Theology*, 28 (2012): 197–228, accessed January 29, 2018 doi:10.1111/j.1468-0025.2012.01737.; Chiedozie Okoro, “Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal of the Doctrine of Salvation.” *Open Journal of Philosophy* 3, no.1A (2013): 264-272, University of Lagos Akoka, Yaba, Nigeria. Published Online, SciRes, accessed January 29, 2018 <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojpp.2013.31A042>.

² Ibid., 47; Albert Mohler, “*The Goodness of God and the Reality of Evil*,” www.albertmohler.com, accessed February 24, 2018 <http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/05/21/the-goodness-of-god-and-the-reality-of-evil-4>.

³ Robert L. Thomas, Gen. ed., *Holeman’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. New American Standard. Hebrew – Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries, (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1981), #3444.

⁴ Michael Agnes, ed., *Webster’s New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*. 2nd ed. (Cleveland: Wiley Publishing, Inc. 2002).

⁵ Norman L. Geisler, “Beware of Philosophy: A Warning to Biblical Scholars,” 10; Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Charles J. Anderson, and Michael J. Sleaman, *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 38-39.

⁶ Col. 2:8; Geisler, “Beware of Philosophy,” 10.

exegetical application, carrying principals for today's Believer; however, when Geisler says, "we cannot properly beware of philosophy unless we be aware of philosophy," he is relaying a valid truth: for we don't know what we don't know, until we know it.⁷ The Christian's prepositional object of faith is salvation, as provided by *Yahweh*, to a right relationship in Christ Jesus.⁸

Theories of salvation according to Okoro, operate in the context within world religions and claim to be correct understandings of salvation in the 21st century.⁹ Pluralism opines there are many roads to one god, and no religion can claim to be the exclusive way to God. But who or what is their thought of a god? Universalism states that all are reconciled to God, no human beings are eternally punished or separated from God.¹⁰ Mark Rathel in "Theories of Salvation," says, inclusive salvation by general revelation claims people can receive salvation without an explicit knowledge of Jesus; post-mortem salvation opportunity affords a second time for people receive an opening to develop faith in Christ; a restrictivist view of salvation, states in the name of Jesus only, thus becoming the Savior of only those who have explicit faith in Him.¹¹ Christian salvation is exclusive, in that, God acts by delivering human beings from sin and bringing them into a relationship with Himself through the person and ministry of *Yahshua Messiah*, Jesus

⁷ Geisler, "Beware of Philosophy;" A. King, "Philosophy and Salvation: The Apophatic in the Thought of Arthur Schopenhauer," *Modern Theology* 21 (2005): 253–274, accessed January 30, 2018 doi:10.1111/j.1468-0025.2005.00285.x.; Donald Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy: The Unbearable Heaviness of Philosophy Made Lighter*, 4th ed., (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

⁸ Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*, 47; Bruno Dyck and Elden Wiebe, "Salvation, Theology and Organizational Practices Across the Centuries," *Organization* 19, 3 (May 29, 2012): 299–324. accessed January 29, 2018 <https://doi-org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1177/1350508412437073>.; Rasmusson, "Science as Salvation."

⁹ Okoro, "Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal."

¹⁰ Daniel McKanan, "Unitarianism, Universalism, and Unitarian Universalism," *Religion Compass* 7, no. 1 (2013): 15–24, accessed January 30, 2018 from <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/stable/2058739?pq-origsite=summon>.

¹¹ Mark Rathel, "Theories of Salvation," in Ed Hindson and Ergun E. Caner, eds., *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity* (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2008), 430–33; Michael A. Harbin, *The Promise and the Blessing: A Historical Survey of the Old and New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 515–17; Rasmusson, "Science as Salvation."

Christ. The concept of salvation in a monotheistic religion then, encompasses the very character and nature of a god, a Father, a Creator God. The human predicament lies within the nature of the human transformation, asking the eternal question; Is salvation available without knowledge of the person of Jesus? The various held theories of salvation are the result of the different answers they have to these aforementioned, and interrelated questions.¹²

Historic Account of Christian Salvation

Sola gratia, is Latin for salvation, and comes to humans only through God's grace.¹³

Originally, the Christian movement was recognized as a sect of Judaism and shared its protected status as an old religion under Roman law. However, when Jewish rabbis successfully denounced Christianity as a new religion, Rome removed its protection and religious persecution ensued. During this time, the archaeological record in Israel reveals that a measure of acceptance continued, as churches and synagogues were sometimes built next to one another with some new Christians attending both.¹⁴ Biblical Christianity has as its roots in the truthfulness of Scripture, ordered by a Holy God, to include evangelical outreach as a part of a Salvation Doctrine; which today's religious liberalism is characteristically is not interested in evangelism.¹⁵ Steven Davidson, in his piece, "Denial of Substitutionary Atonement," asserts, religious liberalism with its inclusive gospel, would not see the need to change people with the claims of Christ. Liberals claim that many roads lead to heaven, and ultimate truth, may or may not be found in the Bible.

¹² Ibid., 430; N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

¹³ James K. Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics: What It is and Why We Do It*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 147.

¹⁴ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson, Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 300.

¹⁵ Ruth A. Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya: A Biographical History of Christian Missions*, 2nd ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 443-47; Timothy Keller, *An Invitation to the Skeptical: Making Sense of God*, (New York, Penguin Random House, LLC, 2016), 133-36; Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1993), 63-71.

The Bible proclaims and unerring eternal truth that stresses a singular Gospel and a Savior who challenges all His followers to reach others in need of salvation. He says the church today must reject religious liberalism and take the message of Jesus directly to the nations.¹⁶

By understanding this Biblical truth, it is impossible to divorce the saving message of Christ from the man He represented to the world. Incarnational apologetics does not compromise informational apologetics, in reference to social liberalism or liberal apathy, on the contrary, it fully completes the expression of absolute truth; further validating the Gospel, says David Wheeler.¹⁷ In this way, He [*Yahshua*] was made perfect. Eternal salvation comes from Him. [*Yahshua*] saves all those who obey Him. (Heb. 5:9). Theology becomes powerful and important when it is wrapped up in historic identity.¹⁸ As it was 2,000 years ago, there is a group that has suffered greatly as a result of the establishment of the state of Israel, and supported by Western Christian countries, and the rise of evil, it is the historic Christians of the Middle East – who are now the victims of persecution throughout the region: collectively, along with Jews and conservative Muslims (to a lesser degree), they are the scapegoats of angry nationalism.¹⁹

Soteriology in Monotheistic Religions

The testimony of Paul - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (I Tm. 1:15, ESV). The

¹⁶ Steven Davidson, "Liberalism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 322; Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel* (Irvine: Regnum Books International, 1999), 130, 480-81.

¹⁷ David Wheeler, "Apologetics, Incarnational," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 52.

¹⁸ Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, and Timothy C. Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations: Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 55, 301.

¹⁹ Andrew Brown, "George W. Bush: New Crusade Converting Jews to Christianity," *The Guardian* (November 14, 2013), accessed July 19, 2018 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/andrewbrown/2013/nov/14/george-w-bush-speech-messianic-judaism>; Christina Lin, "ISIS Caliphate Meets China's Silk Road Economic Belt," *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 18, no. 4 (14, 2015): 21-38, accessed February 19, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1670194641?accountid=12085>.

Doctrine of Salvation is arguably the most important and most comprehensive doctrine taught in Scripture. This doctrine encompasses several other Scriptural teachings which are vitally linked to Biblical salvation: The Doctrine of God whose holiness necessitates salvation; The Doctrine of Christ whose deity, death, and resurrection make salvation possible; The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit whose power imparts salvation; The Doctrine of The Bible which declares salvation truths; and The Doctrine of Biblical Ontology regarding the future because of confidence of salvation.

The Doctrine of Salvation is a very broad and very deep subject yet is so simple that a little child can understand its essential truth.²⁰ To free humans from the curse and eternal bondage of unrepented sin, requires an acknowledgement of those sins and moving to a position of forgiveness by an open confession of sins and into eternal Life in Christ. This salvation is anchored in many Old Testament passages that reference salvation in only *Yahweh*: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD [*Yahweh*] our God, the LORD is one! (Dt. 6:4); “Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us? (Mal. 2:10); The biggest difference of all between *Yahweh* and other gods, is that *Yahweh* is no mere chief of the gods, He is the One and only God.²¹

Theistic arguments, such as natural theology, consists of theistic proofs that are rational arguments for the existence of a monotheistic God, that do not appeal to sacred Scriptures for their cogency. These arguments claim that there are sufficient reasons to believe monotheism is objectively true.²² Monotheism within Christianity, affirms that there is only One True God, and

²⁰ Studygodsword.com, accessed July 23, 2018 https://studygodsword.com/site/user/files/42/Soteriology_Salvation_Bible_Teaching_Course_NY.pdf; Okoro, “Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal.”

²¹ Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict: Life-Changing Truth for a Skeptical World* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017), 399; Randolph E. Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes: Removing Cultural Blinders to Better Understand the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 75-76.

²² Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Truth*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 171.

created the universe out of nothing. This Being then, is worthy of adoration and worship, is distinct from the world, but continuously involved in it, and capable of generating miracles. In other mainstream monotheistic religions, e.g. Islam and Judaism, the concept of *All'ah* or God must be logically coherent for these groups, as with any apologetic, to establish the existence of such, since logic says there are no good arguments for incoherent entities, e.g. a square circle.²³

True salvation comes in a very personal way, and is not so much through religion, as from religion, or better put, from the human enforced boundaries, obligations, and repetitious rituals of man's attempt to reach and relate to God. Okoro claims that by realizing one's capability and utilizing it, affirming oneself in *Yahweh*, and getting involved in the world—this is the true meaning of salvation: not confining oneself to a building and one small group of Believers. He goes further and says, that most people, even those who were outside the church building, are already experiencing this salvation.²⁴ God's mercy extends to all people, for the very fact that Gentiles were included, indicates that the offer of the Gospel was a universal offer. Jesus died for all (Rom. 5:18-19) and God wishes everyone to be saved (2 Pt. 3:9); therefore, the offer of eternal salvation extends to all: to Gentiles and Jews, slave and free (Gal. 3:28).²⁵

Definition of Terms

Soteriology comes from the Greek, *sōtēria* meaning salvation from, a σωτήρ or *sōtēr* meaning savior and λόγος *logos*, to "study," or study of religious doctrines of salvation.²⁶

²³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics: A Comprehensive Case for Biblical Truth*, 171.

²⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 915; Okoro, "Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal," in fact, in view of the churches present religious orientation, those outside maybe more genuinely saved as a Christian than those inside the church.

²⁵ Scott A. Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, *Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey*, 8th ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 64; Samuel and Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*.

²⁶ Thomas, *Holeman's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

Conversion is isolated to religious conversion: the adoption of a set of beliefs identified with one religious' denomination to the exclusion of others, or in replacement thereof. Salvation is based on Scripture, that salvation from sin, in general, and original sin in particular, is made possible by the incarnate life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christian salvation is made possible by the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dying on the cross.²⁷

Monotheism is the belief in the existence of one God, that created the world, is all-powerful, and intervenes in the world. A broader distinction may be made between exclusive monotheism, and both inclusive monotheism and pluriform or panentheistic monotheism, which, while recognizing various distinct gods, postulates some underlying unity.²⁸

Religion is defined as a cultural system of designated behaviors, ethics, worldviews, sanctified places, prophecies, or organizations, that relates humanity to supernatural, transcendental, or spiritual elements.

Truth is most often used to mean being in accord with fact or reality, used in modern contexts to refer to an idea of truth to self, or authenticity; usually held to be opposite of falsehood, which can also take on a logical, factual, or ethical meaning.²⁹

God is herein defined as Creator, *Yahweh, Jehovah, YAH, Elohim Adonai, and Father*. To be juxtaposed with God, god is any deity, and not the God of the Bible.

Kabbalah comes from the Hebrew word *qabal*, meaning to receive or accept as tradition or knowledge, referring to the reception of esoteric doctrines known only to an initiated few.³⁰

²⁷ Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*; Okoro, "Theistic Humanism and the Hermeneutic Appraisal," which in the context of salvation is referred to as the atonement.

²⁸ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 348-49, 361.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 301; Agnes, ed., *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*.

Liberal is a term used to define the translation that occurs when any adherent or follower of a particular religion abandons the traditional view of authority and truth, in order to substitute a newer source of authority, typically based on experience or intellectual conclusions.³¹

Designated Religions and Sub-Categories

The first studied religion to seek truth about salvation is Judaism, the first established monotheistic religion, consisting of Orthodox Rabbinic Jews and their view of Jesus as the *Messiah*, orthodoxy, and eternal life; the liberal Jewish belief with a lack of doctrinal Mosaic Law, thus the Biblical implications of being a liberal Jew; and a look at Messianic Jews who see first Jesus as a Lamb and then as the coming King. Christianity is the second monotheistic belief researched, with Evangelical Protestantism emphasizing salvation in Jesus versus a god; Liberal Protestantism and how it correlates with Evangelicalism; and Hebraic Christians, or *Messianic Gentiles* and the significance of *Yahshua Messiah*. Catholicism is examined with its Salvation Doctrine of the Catholic Church and a look at where the Pope fits into the salvation plan. The third established monotheistic religion is *Islam*, which include *Muslims* obtaining salvation by submission to *Islam* and how *Islamism* correlates with salvation in *Yahshua*. The prophet *Muhammad*, known as the Last Prophet of *Islam*, is highlighted along with the radical *Muhammadian Islamic* momentum of late, including the significance of radicalized *Islam*, its *Qur'anic* mandate of *Islamic* theology, and finally the *Qur'an* itself as a holy book of truth and the epistemological research into its claims.

The focus of this thesis is on monotheism in these three major world religions that worship a singular God: Judaism, Christianity, and *Islam*. These monotheistic religions are derived from the Old Testament which maintains the only consistent, monotheistic view of God.

³¹ Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 320; Agnes, *Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus*.

Regarding the Israelites unique worldview, Oswalt writes: “only once in the history of the world has a culture contrived to attain and maintain the idea of the absolute unity of deity. Israel alone insisted on the Oneness of God, even in the end to the death if necessary.”³²

Prudential Summary of Religions

Only one other religion is as prudentially charged as Christianity and Judaism: *Islam*. *Islam* claims that being a *Muslim* is the only way, or at least the surest to eternal felicity. Prudential matters do not determine beliefs, they merely prime the pump for investigation and consideration. One must consider the credibility of any religious claim, in addition to its sagacious promises. In assessing these essential claims of *Islam*, it is found that “they are in intellectually wanting.”³³ *Islam* actually makes zero promise of eternal life to any *Muslims* unless one dies in a *jihad*, or holy battle: the giving of one’s life is supposed to send the Muslim straight to heaven and be rewarded in many ways. However, no *Muslim* is given certainty as to whether he or she will enter paradise: the *suras* are clear, one can only hope that one's good deeds outweigh one’s bad deeds, or that *All’ah* will show mercy.³⁴

Berger maintains that contemporary Judaism holds a variety of beliefs on the afterlife. The more Orthodox schools of Judaism affirm the existence of eternal states of reward or punishment; however, conservative Jews believe that Jews can be accepted unto *Yahweh* through obeying basic moral commands, as do Gentiles, in that they do not have to be Jewish to be accepted by *Yahweh*. Jews may believe that Gentiles are missing the richness of religious life by

³² John Oswalt, BAM, 64 in McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 399; Vanhoozer, Anderson, and Sleaman, *Everyday Theology*; Ali Mir Satish Kolluri, “Redefining Secularism in Postcolonial Contexts: An Introduction,” *Cultural Dynamics* 14, no. 1 (March 1, 2002): 7-20, accessed January 2, 2018 <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/stable/2058739?pq-origsite=summon>; Ed Hindson and Elmer L. Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey: An Introduction*, (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2013), 418-19.

³³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 161.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 161-62.

not engaging in Judaism,³⁵ but the Gentiles non-participation in Judaism, *per se*, has no eternal lethal penalties.³⁶

Christianity could not be more dissimilar, underscoring Christ and the Apostles promise of eternal life, beginning in the here and now, to be the true faith on the basis of God's love and grace (Rom. 8:16), which is received by faith alone in *Messiah Yahshua* (Eph. 2:8-9). Jesus promised this, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. The one who believes in Me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in Me, will never die (Jn. 11:25-26). So, if Christianity is true, then a Believer can find assurance of salvation; but if *Islam* is true, a *Muslim* can only work for salvation and hope he or she ends up in paradise. Of the two options, Christianity is then, much more attractive. However, truth claims are not decisively settled by which are most attractive, but Christianity if true, would offer far more to the Believer, then would *Islam* if it were true.³⁷

Table 1. Understanding Salvation in Three Major World Religions

Issue	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Person or Messiah	Rabbi Messiah	Yahshua Messiah	The Twelfth Mahdi
Salvation is obtained	Obeing Mosaic Law	Grace and The Cross	Good deeds or jihad
Accept original sin	Do not believe in it	Accept this as truth	Do not believe in it
Biblical Scripture	Old Testament only	OT and NT as truth	Bible is corrupted
Who is God?	YAH, I Am, G_D	Heavenly Father God	All'ah the One God
God's Messenger	All Rabbis	Jesus Christ, Yahshua	Muhammad
View of humanity	YAH's chosen people	Created in His Image	All submit to All'ah

³⁵ David Berger, "The Fragility of Religious Doctrine: Accounting for Orthodox Acquiescence in the Belief in a Second Coming," *Modern Judaism* 22, no. 2 (2002): 103-14, accessed January 29, 2018 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1396581>.

³⁶ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 162; Nurit Stadler, "Is Profane Work an Obstacle to Salvation? the Case of Ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) Jews in Contemporary Israel," *Sociology of Religion* 63, no. 4 (Winter, 2002): 455-74, accessed January 10, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/216772130?accountid=12085>; Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 233-36; Berger, "The Fragility of Religious Doctrine."

³⁷ *Ibid*, 161-62; Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, 310-12.

Chapter Four

The Messiah Conundrum

This chapter explains the problem in having multiple religions and exactly why mankind needs saving. Evidence exists everywhere for phenomenological salvation, as well as tolerance for all religions. To fully explore the *Messiah* conundrum, we will look at exclusivity at war with inclusivity within the salvation message of monotheism amongst various religions. Ralph Klein, a Christ Seminary Professor Emeritus of The Old Testament, at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, who studied at Harvard with numerous Jewish colleagues, and lived for many years in a St. Louis Jewish neighborhood,¹ explains the multiple fulfillment scenarios in the Hebrew Bible as enunciated by the prophets.² The death of the *Messiah*, he says, is not one of them. Klein opines that Christians need to avoid imposing their understanding of Jesus as *Messiah* on different prophecies in the Old Testament. The New Testament has adopted many traditions that are found in the Old Testament, and there are indeed *messianic* passages in the Old Testament, but few *messianic* promises, he claims.³

The opposing view is that Born-again Christians await the coming return of a Glorified *Yahshua ah Masshiach*. This *Messiah*, in Thomas (#4899), comes from the Hebrew *Masshiach*, meaning anointed; (#3323) and *Yitshar* meaning, The Anointed One: “the Anointed King [*Masshiach*] will come,” (Dn. 9:25b);⁴ “We have found the *Messiah* [*Yitshar*],” (Jn. 1:41).

¹ William W. Klein, Craig L. Bloomberg, and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).

² Ibid.

³ Ralph Klein, elca.org. “Covenantal Conversations: Christians in Dialogue with Jews and Judaism,” *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. 2010. DVD created by ELCA conservative panel on Lutheran Jewish relations. Date unknown, accessed July 19, 2018 http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Covenantal_Conversations.pdf.

⁴ Thomas, *Holeman's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

Savior in Thomas (#3467) is from the Hebrew, *Yasha* which means to bring salvation, to be victorious: “My [*Elohim*] is my rock. I go to [*Yahweh*] for safety.⁵ He is like a shield to me. He’s the power that saves me. He’s my place of safety. I go to God [*Elohim*] for help. He’s my Savior [*Yasha*]. He saves me from those who want to hurt me,” (2 Sm. 22:3, NIRV). “After these things I heard a roar in heaven. It sounded like a huge crowd shouting, “Hallelujah! Salvation [*Yahshua*] and glory and power belong to our [*Elohim*]” (Rv. 19:1, NIRV).

Orthodox Jews await the arrival of *Elijah* and the *Messiah* to rebuild the Holy Temple and usher in the *Messianic* age. According to Halverson and Armstrong, the Jewish view of *Yahshua ah Masshiach*, the *Messiah*, and not Jesus Christ, is a Jewish Rabbi *Messiah* according to Orthodoxy. This *Messiah* is a mortal human being who is not divine. He will restore the Jewish kingdom and extend his righteous Jewish rule over the earth, and will execute judgment, and right all wrongs.⁶ Reform Judaism, instead of a belief in a *messiah* as a person, or a Divine being, Reform Jews favor the concept of a utopian age towards which humankind is progressing; a so-called *messianic* age. Whereas conservatives, says Richard Robinson, hold much the same view as the reformers, but fall into following a rabbi relationship, as with orthodoxy.⁷

Muslims are divided on a need for a *messiah*; however, the *Shiites* await the return of the twelfth *Imam* (*messiah*) called the *Mahdi*, similar to the way Christians look to the return of Christ Jesus. *Sufism* is the mystical third wing of *Islam* with oneness as the goal of the *Sufi*. *Muhammad’s* legacy as *Islam’s* prophet substantiates a massive historical influence on the Arabs and is one of mystery in an epoch of cultural Arabian tolerance and diversity, thus inviting a

⁵ Thomas, *Holeman’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*.

⁶ Dean Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, (Grand Rapids: Bethany House Publishers, 2003), 130-31; Armstrong, *A History of God*, 56-61.

⁷ Richard Robinson, “Judaism and the Jewish People,” in Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 130-31; *Ibid*, 67.

critical epistemological and theological analysis.⁸ Caner documents, *Muhammad* was told by an angel that the world had abandoned true worship, and that he was chosen by *All'ah* as a prophet to bring the final message to the world. This message is relatively straightforward: First, all religions on the earth were now corrupt; Second, he was to proclaim the worship of the One God, named *All'ah*; Third, he was to receive the true words of *All'ah*, record them, and bring all people back to the straight path.⁹

Why Does Mankind Need Saving?

The Bible is very clear about the state of humanity. Paul declared that there is no one righteous, not even one (Rom. 3:10), while King David said, that people were born sinners (Ps. 51:5), and although Adam, along with Eve, was created by YAH without sin, he willingly chose to disobey God's commandment, and did eat of the Tree of Knowledge, of good and evil, (Gn. 2-3). Lew Weider says, the New Testament indicates, that because of Adam's sin, he and his descendants became sinners, and death became a reality for all mankind (Rom. 5:12). Sin does not only result in man's death, but also places man under God's Holy judgment (Jn. 3:36), and thus in need of a Savior (Rom. 5:8-9). The Bible is unequivocal, that because of sin, all mankind needs to be saved. Because man has been created in God's image (Gn. 1:27), he also has an inward witness or conscience (Rom. 2:15), revealing God's general will for his life, declares Weider.¹⁰ Mankind is without excuse for not having a personal relationship with the Creator, because *Yahweh* made Himself known throughout history to mankind; but man rejected *Yahweh* for a god made by his own hands (Rom. 1:21-23). A reasonably clear Biblical picture of non-

⁸ Phil Parshall, *Bridges to Islam: A Christian Perspective* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

⁹ Ergun Caner, "Islam," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 278; Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*.

¹⁰ Lew Weider, "Exclusivity of Salvation," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 428.

Christian religions are painted in the Old and New Testaments.¹¹ In the Old Testament, *Yahweh* set Israel free from Egypt and commanded her to enter Canaan, conquering the peoples there because of their abominable practices (Lv. 18:24-25). Israel's possession of Canaan is at least in part, a judgment against the religious practices of the people in the land.¹²

Phenomenological Salvation

The phenomenology of religion concerns the experiential aspect of religion, describing religious phenomena in terms consistent with the orientation of worshippers. It views religion as made up of different components and studies these components across religious traditions in order to gain some understanding of them.¹³ This phenomenological approach is also applied to the study of salvation, owing its conceptualization and early development to Pierre Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye (1848-1920), William Brede Kristensen (1867-1953), and Gerardus van der Leeuw (1890-1950).¹⁴ Phenomenologically, there is a triadic structure to the event: First the subject; Second the experience; Third the numinous object, thus the numinous, transformational experience. This transformation is isolated to the trigger point of confession of sins, receiving forgiveness from Jesus, and having a visible life-altering, personal encounter with the Living God, Abba, Father. The counter-objection to the salvation experience arguments, can be found in the projection objection: Can all religious claims be reduced to merely human ideas and aspirations—spiritual, magical, supernatural, being washed clean, and full of trembling?¹⁵

¹¹ Weider, “Exclusivity of Salvation,” 428.

¹² Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 290.

¹³ S. Jonathon O'Donnell, “Secularizing Demons: Fundamentalist Navigations in Religion and Secularity,” *Journal of Religion and Science Zygon* 51 (2016): 640–660, accessed January 29, 2018 <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/stable/2058739?pq-origsite=summon>.

¹⁴ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 381-83.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 371-83.

Tolerance for All Religions

Throughout the history of the church, Christians have believed that the alternative ways to Father God, offered by non-Christian religions, are ultimately false. Satish and O'Donnell sustain, that tolerance of, and cooperation with, non-Christian religions, prove to offer good alternatives to the dehumanizing practices of ideologies of secular culture.¹⁶ This belief has been Biblically founded in both Old and New Testaments. History records, that among North Americans missionaries, there is a reputation for being intolerant of people who follow other religions, in light of Biblical condemnation of other gods. What attitude then, should today's missionaries take toward people who follow different gods? Certainly, tolerance is a term defined in context, e.g. when used in a largely Christian culture with minority religions, it will take on a different meaning, then when used in a largely non-Christian or anti-Christian setting.¹⁷ Tolerating others means putting up with others in spite of disagreements. Jesus calls followers to love their neighbors, but, is this alone fulfilled simply by tolerating them? Scripturally, Christians are called, not simply to tolerate, but to go further by showing *agape* love to the followers of non-Christian religions. Jesus reminded His faithful, that even the sinners love those who love them. His call is higher, they are to love those who hate them, and this certainly applies to those who follow other religions which vehemently deny Christianity (Mt. 5:43-48).¹⁸

A second meaning of the term tolerance is called new tolerance, or pluralistic tolerance. On the surface, this new tolerance sounds similar to the traditional tolerance; in reality, the two are quite different. The primary point of conflict is the way ideas and values are evaluated. New

¹⁶ Satish, "Redefining Secularism in Postcolonial Contexts;" O'Donnell, "Secularizing Demons."

¹⁷ Ibid; David J. Hesselgrave, "Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant," Vol. 12:3 July-September 1995, n/p, accessed 2015.

¹⁸ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 291; Emily A. Schultz and Robert H. Lavenda, *Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective on the Human Condition*, 9th ed., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); O'Donnell, "Secularizing Demons;" cf, Luke 6:32-36.

tolerance goes well beyond the traditional use of tolerance, refusing to distinguish between truth and error, and right and wrong. In new tolerance, all beliefs are equally true and equally valid. But if all ideas, opinions, or actions are right, then what can be wrong? Truth is weakened because truth is viewed as relative, and not absolute. This diminished state of truth is governed by a secularized society, and the whims of individuals.¹⁹ Troy Matthews hypothesizes, tolerance requires judgment, that in its purist definition, the presence of tolerance assures the presence of a disagreement. A person must now make a judgement about what ideas, opinions, or behaviors are appropriate. If the proposed principal, behavior, or idea is agreed upon, there is nothing to tolerate; therefore, for an act of new tolerance to be applied, an opposing viewpoint must be held—the implication is that to tolerate a view one must first believe the other is wrong.²⁰

This highly touted new tolerance urges acceptance of all belief systems. However, though this view is said to be tolerant, it is not Biblical. Scripture clearly commands that Christians must take the Good News of Jesus Christ, The Gospel, to all people everywhere (Mt. 20:18-20): this is not an option, but a command.²¹ Scripture is also clear about Christ Jesus, who made the bold statement, “I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life” (Jn. 14:6), which leaves no room for other pathways to the Creator, *Yahweh*. Jesus must, therefore, according to new tolerance, be classified as intolerant by those who hold to this position.²² Groothuis says, apathy and tolerance are the enemies of truth, with apatheism resting on a benign indifference, refusing to become passionate about one's own beliefs or the beliefs of others. A person may have religious preferences, but

¹⁹ Troy Matthews, “Tolerance,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 472.

²⁰ Ibid.; Satish, “Redefining Secularism in Postcolonial Contexts.”

²¹ Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*.

²² Troy Matthews, “Tolerance,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* 473; Samuel and Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*.

they are not the engines of energetic commitment, nor do they fuel controversy. Tolerance refuses to hate or disrespect those with whom there is disagreement, even when it concerns the things that matter most. The ideal of tolerance, in the western classical sense, is compatible with strong convictions on religious matters; and with raging controversies.²³

The Problem at Hand

John Hicks pontificates, that all religions could be true. *Muslims* claim that *Muhammad* is the supreme and final authority, the prophet of *All'ah*, and that the *Qur'an* must take preference over other religions books—even the Bible. It is hard to see how *Muslim* claims can be reconciled to Orthodox Christianity.²⁴ Christianity asserts that Jesus is uniquely the Son of God, and that salvation comes only through Him. How can this Christian claim be true, and be reconciled with Orthodox Hindu, Buddhist, or *Islamic* views, which might admit Jesus to be just a revealer of God and a good teacher, but could never admit Jesus Christ is the only way or final truth? Additionally, one can adopt a wrong Christology and misinterpret His words of salvation and repentance, or that Jesus forgives everyone at judgment time. There are claims made by various world religions that are simply incompatible with those made by other, even parallel major religions.²⁵ “The gods we worship on the hills and mountains are useless. You are the Lord [*Yahweh*] our God. You [*Elohim Adonai*] are the only one who can save us” (Jer. 3:23a, NIRV).

Exclusivity at War with Inclusivity

Moreau and Armstrong agree, that mystery religions are inclusive, and Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are exclusive. Historic Israel was a people in a covenant relationship with YAH

²³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 150.

²⁴ Berger, "The Fragility of Religious Doctrine."

²⁵ Stephen C. Evans, and R. Zachary Manis, *Philosophy of Religion: Thinking About Faith*, 2nd ed., (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 214; Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*.

and that covenant was explicitly monotheistic, Scripturally based, and very exclusive. In the New Testament, the statements about the uniqueness and exclusivity of *Yahshua* as the only way to *Yahweh* (Jn. 3:36; 1 Tm. 2:5), speak heavily against the broadly inclusivistic approach to religions.²⁶ The Christian apologetic must focus on the redemptive work of Christ, not compromising, but holding on to an exclusive Gospel, that clearly teaches *Yahshua ah Masshiach* is the exclusive way, and that there are no other ways to salvation and eternal life.²⁷

The exclusivity of salvation, from an evangelical Christian perspective, argues that no person can go to Heaven apart from receiving Jesus Christ as his or her personal Savior. In our pluralistic and politically correct world, this response is viewed as intolerant; however, almost all religions have exclusive elements within their basic belief systems. The reason many have difficulty accepting the evangelical Christian claim to exclusivity, is because they cannot believe that an all-loving God would condemn followers of other religions to hell.²⁸ Weider emphasizes that salvation by accepting Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8), declares that *Yahshua* demonstrates His own love for us, while we were sinners, by dying in our place. *Yahshua ah Masshiach* not only died but was buried and rose again from the dead; which is the Good News for all mankind (1 Cor. 15:3-4). The resurrection is essential to Christian teaching, so much so, Paul said if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith (1 Cor. 15:13-14).²⁹

²⁶ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 290-91; Armstrong, *A History of God*.

²⁷ Steven Davidson, "Liberalism," in Hindson, and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 321; Paul G. Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts: Anthropological Explorations for Contemporary Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

²⁸ Lew Weider, "Exclusivity of Salvation," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics* 427; Henry S. Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions: An Evolving Christian Understanding." *Mission Studies* 19, no. 1 (2002): 108-136, accessed January 30, 2018 <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/stable/2058739?pq-origsite=summon>; O'Donnell, "Secularizing Demons."

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 428.

Salvation in Monotheism

What is the eternal fate of those who faithfully follow their own religion and have never heard the Gospel? Are they destined to spend eternity separated from God, as Christianity has taught? In an increasingly pluralistic and global world, that position is no longer seen as right, in fact, Christianity's claims to absolute truth are now challenged, even in what were previously considered Christian cultures, suggest Moreau and Tennent.³⁰ *The Book of the Gentiles* and *The Three Wise Men*, given the historical circumstances described herein, it is understandable, that these three religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, should need to be defined in contrast to one another; though fundamentally different. What these three seem to have in common: First, their Semitic origins; Second, the authority of a holy book; and Third, they all agree on theism or monotheism. It is fair to say, that since they lived in such close proximity, there were many attempts to persuade one another of the truth of their particular views.³¹

³⁰ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions* 290; Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007).

³¹ William Edgar and K. Scott Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics: Past and Present*. Vol. 1., (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2009), 410-11; Parshall, *Bridges to Islam; A History of God*.

Chapter Five

Judaism: First Established Monotheistic Religion

The religious system of the Jewish people is known as Judaism, with the first use of the term with this designation, appearing in second century B.C. This occurred when an attempted Hellenization of Jews, in the land of Israel, was overthrown by Judas Maccabaeus, who resolutely risked his life for Judaism (3 Mc. 14:38). Randall Price posits, that Judaism may be distinguished historically as Biblical Judaism, and Rabbinic Judaism, the former, encompassing the Judaism of the first and second temple periods, and the latter form after the Council of Yavneh (A.D. 90). The unifying principles of Judaism are an identity by Covenant with God and His chosen people, based on the Bible and a unifying expression of this relationship tradition.¹

There is a distinction between Judaism and the Jewish people, states Richard Robinson, a difference between the people and the religion. Not all Jewish people consider themselves to be religious, many profess to be atheists, agnostics, or secular. While not all Jewish people follow the religion of Judaism, when Jews choose to be religious, they generally choose some variety of Judaism rather than another religion. Most Jewish people would consider Christianity to be a religion appropriate for non-Jews.² With this in mind, we can say that the term Judaism is sometimes used to include not only the faith of modern Jews, but also that of the Old Testament. Other times, it is used to include the entire Jewish way of life; however, it might be best to use the term Judaism to refer to religions of the rabbis that developed from around 200 B.C. onward.³

¹ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 297.

² B. Z. Sobel, "Jews and Christian Evangelization: The Anglo-American Approach," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 58, 2 (December 01, 1968): 241, accessed February 23, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1296164298?accountid=12085>.

³ Urban C. von Wahlde, "'The Jews' in the Gospel of John: Fifteen Years of Research (1983-1998)." *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 76, no. 1 (2000): 30-55, accessed January 22, 2018 [http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/l; Stadler, "Is Profane Work an Obstacle to Salvation?"](http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/l; Stadler,)

In this way, Christianity is not described as a daughter religion of Judaism, but more correctly as a sister religion, both branched from Old Testament faith and tradition.⁴

Robinson estimates that from around 200 B.C. new institutions and ways of life developed that distinguished Rabbinic Judaism from the religion of Old Testament. New institutions arose, such as the *synagogue* as the house of worship, and the *yeshivot* as religious academies for the training of rabbis that held religious authority. Modern Judaism is the existence of three main branches: Orthodox Judaism; Reform Judaism; and Conservative Judaism. This division is not quite equivalent to a Christians understand by denominations, but where one's identity is often tied strongly to a particular affiliation or determined by family.⁵

There was only one kind of Judaism until the age of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, only later to differentiate it from the other branches of Judaism, was it called Orthodox. Today Orthodox Judaism is characterized by an emphasis on tradition and strict observance to the Law of Moses as interpreted by the rabbis.⁶ Reform Judaism began in Germany at the time of the Enlightenment or *Haskalah*, emphasized ethics, the precepts of the prophets, and sought to modernize what were considered outmoded ways of thinking and doing.⁷ Conservative Judaism can be compared to Liberal Protestantism, developed from nineteenth century German roots as the middle ground branch.⁸ The more conservative forms of Judaism affirm much of what Christians believe, since they take the Hebrew Scriptures to be authoritative.⁹ The

⁴ Richard Robinson, "Judaism and the Jewish People," in Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 125-26.

⁵ Ibid., 126-27; Hindson and Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey*, 418-19.

⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., it can be helpful to compare Orthodox Judaism with Roman Catholicism or Greek Orthodoxy.

⁹ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 588.

Reconstructionist wing of Judaism is an American offshoot of conservatism, maintaining that Judaism is a religious civilization. Zionism can also be listed here, because it is sometimes mistaken as a form of Judaism; however, in reality, it is a political movement dating from the nineteenth century concerned with the return of the Jews to the land of Israel.¹⁰ Hasidic Judaism, usually called Hasidism, is an ultra-orthodox movement, characterized by its strict Mosaic laws, mystical teachings, and is socially separatist.

Orthodox Rabbinic Jews.

Price and Sobel say that Orthodox Judaism follows the traditional practices of Judaism as it was developed between 400-500 A.D. This includes a strict adherence to the written *Torah* תורה, the teachings of the Jewish Bible as the Divine Law, and oral *Torah* contained in the *Talmud* תלמוד and *Mishnah* משנה as its contemporary. While all Orthodox Jews are observant Jews, males alone wear the *tallitot* (prayer shawls) with *tzizit* (fringes) and *yarmulkes* (skullcaps), and *tefillin* (phylacteries when praying).¹¹ Orthodox Jews accept the written *Torah* as a basis of religious authority, but also the oral *Torah* as its authoritative and definitive interpretation, “we read the Bible through the eyes of the *Talmud*,” according to von Wahlde.¹² The *Talmud*, is believed to have been imparted by *Yahweh*, or “I Am” at Mount Sinai, therefore, also the Word of God. However, Orthodox Jews maintain an attenuation of religious authority with each successive generation.¹³ With respect to the nature of man, Orthodox Judaism affirms

¹⁰ Richard Robinson, “Judaism and the Jewish People,” in Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 128-33.

¹¹ Randall Price, “Judaism,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 298; Sobel, “Jews and Christian Evangelization,” a separated home and lifestyle marked by keeping kashrut, kosher laws, and a religious education for children.

¹² von Wahlde, “The Jews' in the Gospel of John,” oral tradition was not written down until the third century A.D. and The *Mishnah*, seventh century A.D.

¹³ Randall Price, “Judaism,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*. 298; Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word: A Hands-On Approach to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying the Bible*.

human dignity, man as the pinnacle of *Yahweh's* creations, and his possession of free will: it rejects the Christian concept of original sin or innate sinfulness, asserting that man can become righteous through the observance of Jewish Law, and, the performance of *mitzvoth* מצוות (commandments). Even so, advancement comes only by God's grace as He responds mercifully to man's initiative in works, reasons Price.¹⁴

With respect to eschatology and a savior figure, Orthodox Jews await the arrival of Elijah and the *Messiah* משיח to rebuild the Temple and usher in the *Messianic* age. However, some following the Zionist teachings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, believe it is the obligation of the present generation of Jews, those who have witnessed the establishment of a Jewish state, to initiate the spiritual process that will culminate in the *Messianic* era, by either rebuilding the temple, or making the necessary preparations for its rebuilding.¹⁵ In keeping with the literal fulfillment of the prophets, as interpreted by the rabbis, after the war of Gog and Magog (in which Israel's *Messiah* will be victorious, Ez. 38:1-23; Rv. 20:8), there will be a physical and spiritual restoration of the land of Israel and a Golden Age of peace and justice will prevail. This view sees that during this era of redemption, the Jewish people will rule over all the earth and serve the Lord as a kingdom of priests and teacher of Judaism for the nations.¹⁶ Every *Torah* scholar strictly dedicates his life to studious-- contemplative activities. In this way, members of the community adopt rational theories for explaining world events.¹⁷ This refers to the tradition

¹⁴ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 298-99.

¹⁵ Sobel, "Jews and Christian Evangelization."

¹⁶ Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 298; Stan Telchin, *Some Messianic Jews Say, Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity: A Loving Call to Unity*, (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2004).

¹⁷ See Ben-Sasson, 1984 in Bernd U. Schipper, "From Milton to Modern Satanism: The History of the Devil and the Dynamics Between Religion and Literature," *Journal of Religion In Europe* 3, no. 1 (2010): 103-124, accessed January 31, 2018 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/BF02717528>.

of the *Mithnagdim*, which emphasized rational study and methodology, while vehemently rejecting mysticism and *Messianic* experiences.¹⁸

Mystical Judaism

Ultra-Orthodox Judaism is known as *Hasidic*, the pious or devout ones, also known as *Kabbalistic* Mystical Judaism, and is distinguished by outward dress conforming to the traditional clothing of the community, usually Eastern European, from which individuals immigrated and swore allegiance to the leading *rebbe* הרבי (rabbi) and his dynastic successors. It refers to itself as the *Chabad* movement because the name *Chabad* (CBD), is a Hebrew acrostic for the *Mochin* meaning powers of the intellect: C is *Chokmah* (wisdom); B is *Binah* (understanding); and D is *Da'at* (knowledge and intelligence). This best characterizes them and their adherence of the *Zohar* זוהר, which contains the *Kabbalah* קבלה and its commentary, in their attempt to attain the levels of existence revealed by the *Ten Sefirot*, or emanations of God.¹⁹

The largest and best-known among the *Hasidim*, is the *Lubavitch Hasidic* Movement, or *Lubavitchers*, whose modern *rebbe* was the late Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. He is identified by this movement as The *Messiah*, the one that would immigrate to Israel and initiate the rebuilding of the Temple. However, he suffered physical afflictions, a stroke, and then died.²⁰ The Biblical Messiah will be unmistakable and separate from all the false Christs and gods, states Randall Price;²¹

¹⁸ Telchin, *Some Messianic Jews Say, Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity*.

¹⁹ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 298-99.

²⁰ John Travis, "Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa: A Closer Look at C5 Believers and Congregations," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 17:1, (Spring 2000), accessed March 20, 2017 n/p.; Barry G. Motyer, *The Message of Isaiah* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996); Anna Brawley, "Grafted In: Why Christians Are Thinking About a Jewish Biblical Theology," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 30, no. 4 (2000): 120+, accessed January 30, 2018 <http://link.galegroup.com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A94332351/AONE?u=vic>.

²¹ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson, and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 299.

The Rabbinic View of Jesus as The Messiah

In spite of the doctrinal differences between Rabbinic Judaism and Biblical Christianity, both share a common allegiance to several points: the One True God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Hebrew Scriptures (although arranged according to different theological priorities, e.g. MJSHB); the creation account of Genesis; the coming of a *Messiah*; the final redemption of the world; and to a literal afterlife with its rewards and punishments.²² “From this man’s family line God has brought to Israel the Savior [*Yasha*] Jesus. This is what He had promised” (Acts 13:23, NIRV). To the Jewish scribes, steeped in the Law of G_d, the idea that a man could forgive sins committed against God was inconceivable. Thus, forgiveness, was a prerogative of *Yahweh* alone. John Stott writes, we may forgive the injuries which occur others do to us, but the sins we commit against God, only God can forgive.²³

Orthodoxy and Eternal Life

Jesus told Nicodemus, he who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:18).²⁴ He concludes His comments to Nicodemus by saying, he who lives in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son, will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (Jn. 3:36).²⁵ Jewish Orthodoxy does not recognize the need for salvation in Jesus, or any other person or god other than YAH, choosing in many cases to attempt to live by the many daily rules of the Mosaic Law of the *Torah*. Jesus taught the necessity of repentance for salvation,

²² Randall Price, “Judaism,” in Hindson, and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 300.

²³ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 186.

²⁴ Luther Engelbrecht, and Ernest Hahn, “Jesus as the Son of God,” *Answering Islam*, accessed April 23, 2017 <http://www.answeringslam.org/Hahn/son.html>.

²⁵ Lew Weider, “Exclusivity of Salvation,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*. 428.

when He said, unless you repent. you too will all perish (Lk. 13:3; cf. Mk. 1:15). Lew Weider avers, it can be concluded then, from a Biblical perspective, that a person must exercise faith and repentance in order to receive the eternal reward of Heaven. But again, some Jews do not believe in heaven or hell; however, the question remains, orthodox or not: Can a person by faith believe in God, repent of sin, and receive eternal life, without trusting in Jesus as Savior?²⁶

Replacement Theology

Barry Leventhal in his article, “Israel and Replacement Theology,” argues Israel and Replacement Theology, sometimes called supercessionism, is the doctrinal position that teaches, when Israel rejected her own *Messiah*, the Lord Jesus Christ, YAH replaced the Jewish people with the Christian church, also known also as the Theology of Displacement. Some desiring to put a more positive connotation on this position, calling it an extension or continuation of the Old Testament people of God into the New Testament Church. This brand of theology makes all of God's ancient promises to Israel, originally pointing forward to a *Messianic* Kingdom on the earth, and applies them allegorically to the church, the so-called New Israel.²⁷

Conservative Judaism, on the other hand, lies among the continuum between Orthodox and Reform Judaism. Based on the principles of Zacharias Frankel, it's theological perspective, as articulated by Jewish Theological Seminary's Solomon Schechter, is that the legal, moral, and spiritual commandments of the *Torah* were placed by *Yahweh* into the hands of the Jewish people, that they may be adjusted in keeping with their own social evolution. While conservative doctrine states, that the decisions of the *Torah* and *Talmud* must be followed, that Zionism is a fundamental principle, and that while the Commandments must be practiced, their approach is

²⁶ Lew Weider, “Exclusivity of Salvation,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*. 428.

²⁷ Barry Leventhal, “Israel and Replacement Theology,” in Hindson, and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 283; Telchin, *Some Messianic Jews Say, Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity*.

pragmatic and left open to interpretation and application by individual congregations. This shifting of authority from the rabbis to broad acceptance by Jewish community, effectively separates Conservative Judaism from Orthodox Judaism, which permits no changes to the traditional understanding of The Commandments.²⁸

Steven Davidson asserts, the reform branch of Judaism is the most liberal of the three. One such evidence of this liberality is seen in the reformers acceptance of women as rabbis, their acceptance of interfaith families, and their allowance of full participation of gays and lesbians in synagogue life. This is in violation of the traditional teachings associated with the *Tanakh*.²⁹ Reform Judaism is the most progressive of the three major movements in Judaism, according to the book, *Towards a Theology of Judaism* by Rabbi Professor Manfred Vogel, Reformers do not regard the relationship to God through a vertical connection of man to God, as achieved through a fulfillment of The Commandments between God and man, but through the horizontal connection of the fulfillment of The Commandments between man and man.³⁰ The founding platform at the time when the reform movement began in Pittsburgh around 1885, rejected many Jewish traditions as entirely foreign to their mental and spiritual state, and a hindrance to modern spiritual elevation. Therefore, religious authority is vested solely in the individual as the autonomous interpreter of Jewish tradition. In the reform movement, the ultimate authority is the local contemporary chic: feminism, egalitarianism, Eastern meditation, homosexuality, you-name-it, according to Morris Goldman's "Letters," in the Jerusalem Post International Edition.³¹

²⁸ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 299.

²⁹ Steven Davidson, "Liberalism," in *Ibid.*, 320-21; Hindson and Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey*.

³⁰ Randall Price, "Judaism," in *Ibid.*, 299.

³¹ April 9, 1999, p. 11; Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 299.

Kabbalah

David Pettus, in his piece “*Kabbalah*,” affirms the *Kabbalah* is a highly developed form of Jewish mysticism with philosophical underpinnings that flowered in Spain in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There is an eclectic form of this, sometimes called Hermetic *Kabbalah*, and is experiencing a revival in the twenty-first century due to its practice among high profile celebrities.³² Salvation as it is conceived in *Kabbalah*, involves the restoration of original divine harmony where the divine sparks are loosened and set free from their bonds, and returned to their rightful place of perfection as part of the first Adam, or primordial man. In addition to the practice of *Kabbalah*, the concept of *gilgul* גִּלְגּוּל, on the Hebrew Rolling Wheel (Strong’s Lexicon H1537), figures predominantly in *Kabbalistic* soteriology. The souls that fail to obtain the purity necessary to be restored, are reincarnated, or roll into another body to try again. The reality of the occult-like *Kabbalistic* magical practices of the devotees is this, they have attempted to use these spiritual forces to manipulate the physical world.³³

Liberal Jewish Belief

Liberal Judaism is visibly marked by the inclusion of three major divisions: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. The Orthodox Jew tries most aggressively to hold to the ancient traditions and sources of authority, while the conservative Jew tries to manage a blend between that which is custom and that which is correct. If Christians are to successfully communicate the Gospel, they must discover how to answer, within a Liberal Jewish context, Jewish objections to *Yahshua*, and to present Him both as Israel's *Messiah*, and the Savior of the Jews.³⁴

³² David Pettus, “Kabbalah,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 301.

³³ *Ibid.*, 305.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 301; von Wahlde, “The Jews’ in the Gospel of John.”

The Lack of Doctrinal Mosaic Law

There is religious fragmentation within the grand Jewish liberal narrative by way of combinations of different, even contradictory views from a variety of chronicles: miracles, extreme contemplative practices, dependence on *Yahweh's* will, afterlife beliefs, and spiritualism. To justify their belief, devotees incorporate a new vocabulary based on modern assumptions, and use it to reinforce and assemble new, and more true Jewish knowledge, images, and practices. Members of the community do this, not only to consolidate a coherent worldview, but also to forge novel critical ideas embedded in the Jewish hermeneutical tradition. In so doing, they present a religious extremism that is expressed through fatalism, placing them alongside many other current religious groups who emphasize radicalism and *messianism*, opines von Wahlde.³⁵

Biblical Implications of Being a Liberal Jew

Conversion is a hot-button term for Liberal Jews, implying they are leaving behind one's Jewishness; however, Biblical conversion was spoken of by the prophets, as meaning, "turning back to *Yahweh*" (Is. 44:22), rather than changing one's religion (Jer. 24:7; Jl. 2:12).³⁶ Robinson suggests replacing the name of Jesus, the multi-lingual, Westernized name, often uttered as a curse, with the Hebrew equivalent of *Y'shua*, or *Yahshua*, meaning the Son is the way to YAH, who is Salvation. *Yahshua* is His Hebrew name given by the angel Gabriel who appeared to *Myriam* (Mary in Lk. 1:26-38), the virgin mother of the Jesus of Nazareth, born in Bethlehem.³⁷

Salvation as viewed by Orthodox Judaism is a belief in God's mercy, prayer, and obedience to the Law of Moses. All are necessary for a proper relationship with God; however,

³⁵ Randall Price, "Judaism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 299; von Wahlde, "The Jews' in the Gospel of John."

³⁶ Stadler, "Is Profane Work an Obstacle to Salvation?"

³⁷ Richard Robinson, "Judaism and the Jewish People," in Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 140.

salvation is not considered to be a Jewish concept, in as much as Jewish people presume a standing with God as His chosen people. The Jewish reformed view of salvation is obtained through the betterment of self, society, and its social improvements. Conservative Jews, to the contrary, tend to lean in the direction of the reform view, yet they find it necessary to maintain a Jewish identity.³⁸ David Pettus postulates, if Christians are to successfully communicate their Faith, they must also discover how to answer all Jewish objections to Jesus as Israel's *Messiah*.³⁹

Stories of Conversion

Adam's story: I was born into a family where my father was Jewish and my mother Catholic. Brought up as a Jew in the Reform, as my mother was not allowed to convert in Orthodox. This was incredibly confusing to grow up with. How can one possibly be spiritually connected when you are not accepted by most, not all, but most! The older you get, the wiser you become..... I decided my spiritual journey and chose *Yahshua*.⁴⁰

Messianic Jews

Hilary was engaged recently in a conversation with two of her best friends in the world that are not Jewish, during which they both espoused the opinion that when a Jewish person embraces the Jewish *Messiah*, they *de facto* have converted to Christianity, and thus, have become Christians. They view the term conversion as renouncing one's present religion and embrace the tenets of a new religion.⁴¹ Travis, Telchin, Engelbrecht, and Brawley agree, since the

³⁸ Ibid.; Sobel, "Jews and Christian Evangelization."

³⁹ David Pettus, "Kabbalah," in Hindson, and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 301; von Wahlde, "The Jews' in the Gospel of John."; Sobel, "Jews and Christian Evangelization."

⁴⁰ Adam, Jeremy. Answering the Question: "Why Do Some Jews Convert to Christianity," July 16, 2016, quora.com. Accessed July 19, 2018 <https://www.quora.com/Why-do-some-Jews-convert-to-Christianity>.

⁴¹ Hilary E. Wyss, "Things that do Accompany Salvation: Colonialism, Conversion, and Cultural Exchange in Experience Mayhew's Indian Converts," *Early American Literature* 33, no. 1 (1998): 39-61, accessed January 30, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/215381822?accountid=12085>.

rebirth of the *Messianic* Jewish Restoration in 1967, the vast majority of Jewish people who have embraced *Yahshua ah Masshiach* and accepted Him as the Divine Son of YAH, and have renounced nothing of their Jewish faith, except, the contention of non-*Messianic* Judaism that “Jesus of Nazareth” was just a fully-human teacher and certainly not the *Messiah*.⁴² So, for a Jew to convert to Christianity, much more is required than simply accepting *Yahshua* as the *Messiah*.

This means, for example, that under Israeli law, any person who converts to Christianity is no longer considered legally Jewish.⁴³ The Supreme Court of Israel ruled (1989), that *Messianic* Judaism constituted another religion, that Jewish people who had become *Messianic* were not eligible for *Aliyah* (the prophesied return of Jews to their Homeland, Israel). Under the law,⁴⁴ Travis says, because the Israeli Supreme Court, as well as Judaism in general, consider *Messianic* Judaism to be another religion, it is of utmost importance that those of us within the denomination of Judaism which accepts *Yahshua* of Nazareth as Israel’s *Messiah*. It is therefore, of utmost importance to the *Messianic* Restoration Movement, that we maintain a clear distinction between *Messianic* Judaism and Gentile Christianity.⁴⁵ The fact is, that accepting the Lordship of *Yahshua*, is clearly not the same as converting to Christianity.⁴⁶ “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness” (2 Tm. 3:16, ESV).

⁴² Travis, “Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa; Telchin *Some Messianic Jews Say, Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity*; Engelbrecht, and Hahn, “Jesus as the Son of God;” Brawley, “Grafted In: Why Christians Are Thinking About a Jewish Biblical Theology,” the belief that the Apostolic writings are of human-only origin; and the idea that oral tradition is of equal authority to the *Tanakh*.

⁴³ Familybible.org “Conversion to Messianic Judaism,” August 3, 2016. Author unknown accessed July 19, 2018 http://www.familybible.org/articles/messianic_issues/conversion_to_messianic.html.

⁴⁴ Travis, “Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa”; Brawley, “Grafted In: Why Christians Are Thinking About a Jewish Biblical Theology.”

⁴⁵ Ibid., Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.; Ibid.; Familybible.org, “Conversion to Messianic Judaism.”

First a Lamb Then a King

Brock, Glaser, and Motyer make the statement, that punishment for sin, as in Isaiah 53, is not temporal punishment, but spiritual and/or eternal punishment. Leviticus 17:11 is a key Old Testament verse that points to a trigger point in understanding: without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin (Heb. 9:22). The overall purpose of the sacrificial system was to provide atonement for sin, for the people. To use of the verbs, ‘bore’ and ‘carried’ our sins, would give the impression, as to be reminiscent of the same language found in Leviticus 17.⁴⁷

Yahshua in the Synagogue

Jesus, *Yahshua*, is seen by Jews as being a Jew whose teaching and practice was fundamentally in harmony with the Jewish *rebbe* of the day. It is believed that after the death of Jesus, the Apostle Paul transformed Jesus into a *Messianic* Savior and created a new belief system to accommodate Gentiles. Thus, the study of Jesus as a Jew, by Jews, was prohibited; however, Judaism universally rejects the New Testaments declaration, that Jesus is the *Messiah* of Israel. The basis for Judaism’s rejection, is the contention that *Yahshua* did not literally fulfill Old Testament prophecies.⁴⁸ However, history records that Jesus received worship as God, as shown in the Gospel, “Then those who were in the boat came and worship Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God’” (Mt. 14:33). Bowman and Komoszewski write, “After it is made clear in Matthew, that Jesus regarded God as the only proper object of *proskuneō* [Greek for deity worship], it is striking that Jesus appears so frequently in the same Gospel to be the object of worship.”⁴⁹ Brown writes, “No clearer implication of divinity is found in the Gospel tradition.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Darrell L. Brock, and Mitch Glaser, *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53: Encountering the Suffering Servant in Jewish and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2012), 175.

⁴⁸ Price, “Judaism,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 300.

⁴⁹ Bowman and Komoszewski, 38 in McDowell & McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 176.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 367 in *Ibid.*, 176.

Chapter Six

Christianity: Second Monotheistic Religion

The Doctrine of Jesus Christ not only stood the test of argument, preach Edgar & Oliphint, but held up under cruel persecution under which philosophers would have denied their first principles. Christianity is either false, or it is true. If it be true, discussion is at an end; but, if it be false, Christ must still be acknowledged to have been the wisest of men, seeing that He was able to persuade men to accept difficult doctrines, and to adhere to them so firmly, that no human reason or power has been able to uproot them.¹ Christianity's salvation belief ranges from exclusive, to universal, to reconciliation concepts. While some of the differences are as widespread as Christianity itself, the overwhelming majority agrees, that Christian salvation is made possible by the work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dying on the cross. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, and because of His sacrifice, Believers receive righteousness in God.

Evangelical Protestantism

Christianity is a historically-based religion with public proclamations, placing emphasis on true belief and Biblical virtuous behavior. Jesus is depicted in the Bible as a real historic person, with Gospel accounts containing evidential treasures for anyone to examine, especially for those who wonder about the truth of Christianity, as Hiebert puts it.² Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace's observation, is that what makes Christianity unique among world religions, is it is grounded in history, resting solely on the person of Jesus Christ as a real historical man. The Gospels go to great lengths to speak to where, who, and when of Jesus's ministry.³

¹ Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics*, 481.

² Hiebert, *The Gospel in Human Contexts*.

³ Komoszewski, Sawyer, and Wallace, RJ, 220 in McDowell, and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 308.

The Salvation Doctrine of Evangelicals

Groothuis contends, evangelicals need relational wisdom as to when and how to present the Christian truth. Apologetic dumping, with little concern for the state of the soul of the unbeliever, may relieve pent up tension and display the apologist's knowledge, but it does little to bring someone closer to salvation in Christ.⁴ Paul said to the church at Ephesus, as to the nature of salvation, that by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works so that no one can boast (Eph. 2:8-9).

Salvation in Jesus versus in God

Wilson orates, salvation from God for humans, from Genesis to Revelation, the Bible records God in pursuit of His prize creation. After the fall of man however, the Creator made provision for human sinfulness, holding man accountable for their rebellion through His judgments at Babel and the Great Flood. He later called Abraham to follow His guidance and establish a great people of His own choosing.⁵ God delivered His people from the bondage of Egypt and put them in the Promised Land, then, He made a Covenant with them to be a people set apart. Yet despite their forgetfulness and hardness of heart, God sent prophets to declare neglected truths, designed to bring God's people back to their Creator and Redeemer—YAH. These prophets, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, further spoke of a coming *Messiah* who would rescue Israel and bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth, not just the Israelites.⁶

Paul understood in the New Testament era, that salvation is a gift from God through Jesus Christ, and is not something that man can earn. Even Old Testament Saints, such as Abraham were not saved by works, but by their faith in *Yahweh* (Rom. 4:1-3). Faith in God is not merely

⁴ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 43.

⁵ Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions."

⁶ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 89.

an intellectual acknowledgement that God exists, faith involves understanding the Gospel and an acceptance of that Gospel as fact (1 Cor. 15:1-4).⁷ Salvation also involves repentance, and in the New Testament, repentance means to change one's mind and direction. The term repentance is not limited to the idea of feeling sorry for one's sins; Paul taught and believed that repentance and faith are both necessary for a person to be saved (Acts 20:20-21).⁸

Liberal Protestantism – Christianity

Benjamins says, one can readily trace the Christian commitment to the Deity of Christ through medieval theologians such as John of Damascus (675-749AD) and great reformers such as Martin Luther (1483-1586AD) and John Calvin (1509-1564AD).⁹ It was not until the rise of rationalism, and the Enlightenment, that liberal theologians begin to question, and then deny, the Deity of Christ.¹⁰ The denial of substitutionary atonement is seen in a liberal interpretation of God's Word, flatly denying the sacrificial and substitutional nature of the death of Christ. Some decry, surely, God should have had a better way. Modern Liberals are more Gnostic than biblical, emphasized by their spiritual nature, and deemphasizing the physical reality of each individual as unique. However, the Bible is clear, the death of Christ was a reality, one necessary for man's salvation. The sacrificial death of Christ on the cross is pivotal to the redemptive plan of God, and any deviation from this plan, is an unacceptable abbreviation, claims Davidson."¹¹

⁷ Christoph W. Stenschke, "The Presentation of Jesus in the Missionary Speeches of Acts and the Mission of the Church," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35.1 (2014): 1-18, accessed November 1, 2016 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1738751616/fulltextPDF/7861DCF954B64948PQ/1?accountid=12085>.

⁸ Lew Weider, "Exclusivity of Salvation," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 428;" Samuel and Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*.

⁹ Rick Benjamins, "Something is Recognized': A Liberal Protestant Reflection on Erik Borgman's Cultural Theology." *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 72, no. 4 (2016): 1-8, accessed January 30, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1818002749?accountid=12085>.

¹⁰ David Wheeler, "Apologetics, Incarnational," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 52.

¹¹ Steven Davidson, "Liberalism," in *Ibid.*, 321; Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions."

Christian liberalism is based on rejection of Biblical authority and a departure from the traditional tenant a Scripture-based Christianity. Often liberalism begins with a denial of the absolute truth, as well as the historical accuracy of the Word of God.¹² This denial of Scripture generally begins with diverse ideas concerning the creation account and the Creator. Clearly the claims of Scripture are no longer believed to be authoritative concerning creation as presented in Genesis. These foundational truths include: marriage between one man and one woman; the fall of Man as original sin; a worldwide flood; the separation of languages at Babel; and God's selection of Abraham and calling a people aside of His own.¹³

Epistemology in Liberal Protestantism

The more serious effect of sin and the fall is on humans themselves as Scripture reveals, the blindness and darkness of human understanding. Paul upholds, they knew God, but rejected His knowledge, and blindness followed (Rom. 1:21), and attributes this blindness to the work of Satan: “the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers [Liberal Christians], so that they cannot see the Light of the Gospel of the Glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Cor. 4:4). Although Paul is referring to ability to see the Light of the Gospel, this blindness would doubtless affect the ability to see God in the creation as well.¹⁴ According to Martin Luther, human reason is idolatrous and liable to create a god of our liking, and because there is a great danger that sinful humans will conclude, that what can be known of God on the basis of natural revelation, is all that can be known of God. Calvin, in that same vain, emphasized, that “knowledge of God and our souls are connected,” reasons Beilby.¹⁵ Sinful humans obfuscate the

¹² Duvall and Hayes, *Grasping God's Word*.

¹³ David Pettus, “Kabbalah,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 305.

¹⁴ Mark Silk, "Raising the Devil: Satanism, New Religions, and the Media," *Church History* 71, no. 4 (2002): 925-927, accessed January 31, 2018 <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.1007/BF02717528>.

¹⁵ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 57.

image of the Holy God with an idol of their own fancy. The result, sinful humans are just as Luther said, unable to prove their religious beliefs using reason alone. Without Scripture, “humans warp the *sensus divinitatis* to their own desires and goals. Scripture alone distinguishes God as Creator of the world, from the whole herd of fictitious gods.”¹⁶

Does Liberalism Correlate with Evangelicalism?

David Wheeler, in “Incarnational Apologetics,” says, by understanding the Biblical truth, that it is impossible to divorce the saving message of Christ from the man He represented to the world, one can grasp the fact that incarnational apologetics does not compromise informational apologetics in reference to social liberalism, on the contrary, it fully completes the expression of absolute truth and further validates the Gospel message to the world.¹⁷ Pascal found Christianity unique, in that while other religions and philosophies emphasized either human greatness or human frailty, e.g. liberalism, only Christianity struck the proper balance between the two. The image of God in humans explains the nobility of human beings, and the fall of humans into sin explains our propensity towards evil.¹⁸ Pascal applied these twin aspects of human nature to the matter of knowledge of God, finding two central truths in the Christian message: First, there is a God that humans are capable of knowing; and Second, human sinfulness “separates us from God and renders our knowledge of God at best murky, inchoate, and shot through without doubt.”¹⁹ These two truths must be held in balance, according to Pascal, for emphasizing the knowledge of God over human sinfulness, which leads to intellectual pride and arrogance, but emphasizing

¹⁶ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 57; Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*.

¹⁷ David Wheeler, “Apologetics, Incarnational,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 52.

¹⁸ Mohler, “*The Goodness of God and the Reality of Evil*.”

¹⁹ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 67.

human sinfulness over knowledge of God, leads to despair. Pascal's apologetic was fundamentally Christological in its focus, for in Jesus Christ, he found appropriate emphasis on both aspects of Christian message—God exists and is revealed in Jesus, and humans are sinful and in need of Christ as Redeemer.²⁰

Hebraic Christians - Messianic Gentiles

Paul maintained and taught devotion to the One True God, both before and after his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, “Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And [Paul, now changed from Saul by God] said, “Who are you, Lord?” And he said, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:1-43). Paul had been trained as an Orthodox Jew, and held steadfastly to Orthodox beliefs about God, and would have been unwilling to compromise them for Pagan mythology. He explains that he was transformed, only when, and because, he realized that the Risen Christ was indeed the promised *Messiah ah Masshiach* (Phil. 3:8; Gal. 1:15; Acts 24:14).

What Does Hebraic Christianity Believe?

Paul shows his fluidity by willingly adapting his social behavior to either Gentile or Jew, rabbi or sinner (1 Cor. 9:19-23). This is a vivid application of the incarnation principal; as people only have access to God and the Gospel of a Savior crucified, through their cultural understanding. So, by voluntarily identifying with Jews and Gentiles, Paul authenticates their idiosyncratic cultural obligations.²¹ The resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth is vitally important,

²⁰ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 67.

²¹ Dean Flemming, *Contextualization in the New Testament: Patterns of Theology and Mission*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2005), 27; von Wahlde, “The Jews' in the Gospel of John.”; Vanhoozer, Anderson, and Sleaman, *Everyday Theology*; Brian M. Howell, and Jenell Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology: A Christian Perspective*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011).

because as the Apostle Paul states so clearly, if Christ had not been raised from the dead, then nothing else matters: our resurrection, the church, or Christianity.²² True to its Jewish roots, Christianity did not accept other gods. Jews were committed to an exclusive faith, unlike Gentiles of that era, Jews refused to syncretize Judaism with other religions.²³ Hebraic Christians are the culmination of Born-Again Believers in the Jewish *Yahshua*, and Jews who embrace *Yahshua ah Masshiach*, or Jesus The *Messiah*.

The Significance of Yahshua Messiah

McDowell says, Evidentialism starts with observed natural or historical evidence, and from there, it builds its apologetic case. *Yahshua*'s resurrection from the dead was demonstrative proof of His being the *Messiah*, avers John Lackey.²⁴ The Hebrew Bible taught not that the *Messiah* would inaugurate and rule Israel as Jewish people thought; but that the *Messiah* would suffer, die, and be resurrected (Acts 17:1-34).²⁵ Brooke Westcott's observation, is with all the evidence together, it is not too much to say, there is no historic incident more voraciously supported, than the resurrection of Christ. "Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it."²⁶

Catholicism

Roman Catholicism is by far the largest of the world's monotheistic religions, with a global membership of over one billion souls, approximately 1/6 of the world's population. Catholicism traces its roots back to the original Christian community founded by Jesus Christ,

²² McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 236.

²³ *Ibid.*, 309.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 264.

²⁵ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 39.

²⁶ Brooke Foss Westcott in McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2006), 265.

but many would refute that teaching as revisionist history.²⁷ With the growing persecution of Christians in the second and third centuries, the professing church was splintering and suffering. When Constantine offered Christians a truce by making Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire, they accepted. This was hailed as a great victory for Christianity, but ironically, it was the beginning of a downward spiral into an obsession with power. Soon after the wedding of the church and the state by Constantine in 313, Christian leaders begin to build an institutional structure that consolidated power in Rome. This new Rome remained unchallenged until 1054 when the Eastern Orthodox Church separated from the Roman Catholic Church over the Pope's claim of primacy. The Pope offered crusading armies earthly riches and eternal bliss for killing any Muslims, Jews, or Christians who rejected Papal authority.²⁸

According to Gendron and Carey, Roman Catholicism also denies that the blood of Christ is the only purification for sin. All who died in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, undergo purification so as to achieve Holiness necessary to enter the joy of Heaven. The church gives the name of Purgatory to this final purification through a cleansing fire; however, the Vatican offers a way of escape. A Catholic can make satisfaction for, or, expiate his or her sins through indulgences, therein obtaining remission from temporal punishment of sin for themselves, and also for the souls in Purgatory. These indulgences are drawn from a treasury of merit that contains the prayers and good works of all the saints; it is in this way they attained their own salvation, and at the same time, saving their loved ones. In great contrast, the Bible teaches that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1 Jn. 1:7): And when He had made

²⁷ Timothy C. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa) in Islamic Mosques: A Closer Examination of C-5 'High Spectrum' Contextualization," *International Journal of Frontier Missions* 23:3, (Fall 2006), accessed March 20, 2017 n/p.; Patrick W. Carey, "St. Benedict Center and No Salvation Outside the Church, 1940-1953." *The Catholic Historical Review* 93, no. 3 (2007): 553-575, accessed January 30, 2018 <https://muse.jhu.edu>.

²⁸ Mike Gendron, "Roman Catholicism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 424-25; Carey, "St. Benedict Center and No Salvation Outside the Church, 1940-1953," by the 12th century Roman Catholicism had become the world's most powerful institution.

purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on High (Heb. 1:3). There is no other way our sins can be purged; because without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22).²⁹

The Salvation Doctrine of the Catholic Church

The gospel of the Roman Catholic Church, its Doctrine of Salvation, is diametrically opposed to the Biblical model. How odd this seems at first, but when looking closer, Catholicism not only removes the essential requirement for salvation, personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but also adds other requirements to God's gracious offer of eternal life. Newborn babies who have no capacity for faith, are said to be justified through the sacrament of baptism. The catechism teaches, that in addition to baptism, the receiving of the sacraments, the performing of good works, obtaining indulgences, church membership, and meriting grace, are all necessary to be saved from the punishment of sin.³⁰ The Holy Roman Church firmly believes that no one remaining outside the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews, heretics, or schismatics, can become partakers of eternal life; but that they will go to the eternal life prepared for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41). No one can be saved, no matter how much alms he has given, unless he remains in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church, this according to Moreau.³¹ Catholicism also teaches that obedience to the Church law is a requirement for salvation, posits, Mike Gendron, in "Roman Catholicism;" however, according to Catholic tradition, and supposedly cooperated by converts, there are some sins called venial, that do not cause death.³²

²⁹ Mike Gendron, "Roman Catholicism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 426-27; Carey, "St. Benedict Center and No Salvation Outside the Church, 1940-1953."

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 425.

³¹ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 97.

³² Mike Gendron, "Roman Catholicism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 426-27.

The traditional Roman Catholic position is that union with the Church is necessary for salvation, because the Church possesses the means of salvation. But, if actual union is not possible, God will accept in its stead, a sincere desire for it. Yves Congar pontificates for degrees of membership in the Church, and while the majority of the human race has no visible and official connection with the Church, there is, nonetheless, such a thing as an invisible membership. Wherever there is salvation, there the Church is also: the presence of the Church actualizes salvation.³³ The Church in recent years has been open to the possibility, that outside the visible church, and some who make no claim of being Christians, e.g. *Muslims* and Jews, may be recipients of grace. The Catholic understanding of salvation has become, to a certain degree, broader than the traditional conception, to the point of accepting Interfaithism.³⁴

Where Does the Pope Fit In?

In the sixteenth century a fundraising campaign was commissioned by Pope Leo X to finance the renovation of the Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. The Catholic clergy began selling indulgences, which were said to have the power to remit temporal punishment for sin. In 1517 on October 31, Catholic Priest, Martin Luther called for a reform by nailing his 95 Theses on the door of the Church Castle in Wittenberg Germany. The Roman Catholic Church countered Luther and the reformers by issuing over 100 Damnations at the Council of Trent.³⁵

³³ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 916, Catholic teaching also misrepresents the divine punishment for breaking God's law (Rom. 6:23).

³⁴ Ibid., 917; Aurelian-Petrus Plopeanu, and Ion Pohoata, "Religion as a Major Institution in the Emergence and Expansion of Modern Capitalism. From Protestant Political Doctrines to Enlightenment Reform," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 15, no. 43 (Spring, 2016): 125-43, accessed January 30, 2018 [https:// search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview /1779192128?accountid=12085](https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1779192128?accountid=12085).

³⁵ Mike Gendron, "Roman Catholicism," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 425; Stephen Downs, "Catholics and Other Faiths Since Vatican II" [online]. *The Australasian Catholic Record* 91, no. 1 (Jan. 2014): 49-57, accessed January 18, 2018 <https://search-informit-com-au.ezproxy.liberty.edu/documentSummary;dn=200165193861450>.

Mike Gendron, in “Roman Catholicism,” maintains the canons and decrees of the Council marked Rome's official and deliberate departure from Biblical authority, to a Roman authority of tradition. The teachings of the Pope were now equal to the authority of Scripture—a monumental shift. In 1870 the next Council, Vatican I, asserted the infallibility and Primacy of the Pope. One hundred years later, Vatican II (1962-1965) brought forth a new ecumenical Spirit of cooperation with Protestantism, *Islam*, and Eastern Orthodoxy, or Interfaithism (See Appendix A).³⁶

On October 11th, 1992, the thirteenth anniversary of Vatican II, Pope John Paul II endorsed the New Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) as the modern authoritative statement of the Catholic Faith and Doctrine. In the forward, John Paul II wrote, “I beseech the Blessed Virgin Mary Mother of the Church, to support with her powerful intercession the catechetical work of the entire Church,” states Gendron and Downs.³⁷ The catechism’s goal was to show carefully the content and wonderous harmony of the Catholic faith, but a close examination of the catechism reveals many doctrines that stray from Biblical Christianity.³⁸ “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 Jn. 4:1, ESV).

Stories of Conversion

Imagine thinking you were a Christian your whole life—only to realize that you didn't even truly understand the meaning of the word! I do believe there are many Catholics who are true believers, and I would never want to hurt anyone. However, I was once Catholic myself and was totally in the dark about salvation through grace, and that's why I feel the need to tell the

³⁶ Mike Gendron, “Roman Catholicism,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 425; Downs, “Catholics and Other Faiths Since Vatican II.”

³⁷ Ibid.; Ibid.

³⁸ Mike Gendron, “Roman Catholicism,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 425; Downs, “Catholics and Other Faiths Since Vatican II.”

story of my conversion. I grew up in a loving family who attended the Catholic Church regularly—not just my immediate family, mind you(!)—but my entire family (aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, etc.) was Catholic! I never doubted my faith because I was told to just believe everything the Church taught me without question. The Pope was supreme in his authority, and the priests and nuns were to be treated as "holy" and "special" servants of God who would never teach anything untrue. I also remember my non-Catholic friends asking me about some of the church doctrines, such as purgatory, confession, the Pope, Mary, etc. I always would tell them, "Oh, that's in the Bible!"—but I had no idea where because we were never taught to read the Bible for ourselves, but rather to simply believe what we were told. When I was 21 years old, I had a special friend who was a non-Catholic. He asked me about my salvation, and again I convinced him I was saved. However, the Lord wasn't going to let me get away that easily this time! You see, I'd been taking the doctrines that didn't make sense to me and explaining them away by changing what they really meant. For example, the doctrine of Mary and the "Immaculate Conception"... I had always assumed that this meant Mary conceived JESUS "immaculately"—through the Holy Spirit. In reality, what that teaching says, is that MARY herself was born "without sin." The Bible plainly states that ALL have sinned except for Jesus! That whole weekend, I kept my nose in that Bible and read pretty much the whole New Testament. It was like a light-bulb had come on in my head. Words I'd heard many times before now made perfect sense—in this new light of salvation through grace. I felt light and happy and joyous—like I'd found the truth at last—something "real"!³⁹

I was raised as a devout Roman Catholic and a Christian. I converted to non-denominational Christianity at around 26 years of age. Eventually it simply dawned on me that

³⁹ ourlittleplace.com. Jacki's Testimony. Our Christian Faith: Conversion from Roman Catholicism to Biblical Christianity. Date unknown, accessed July 19, 2018 <http://ourlittleplace.com/our-christian-faith/jacki-s-testimony>.

the emphasis on the virgin Mary was a distraction and that the titles, "Queen of Heaven" and "Mother of God" were inventions by a misled clergy. Two revelations broke it for me completely; First was the matter of praying for the dead; Second was the recurring emphasis on works and earning our salvation. The church talked "grace" but taught and walked "works". The worst of this was that the death of Christ was insufficient atonement for our sins. When my second child was to be christened, I agreed to have him "dedicated to God" by a Full Gospel minister. He asked me if I had accepted Jesus? He led me through the sinner's prayer... I think it was at that moment that I decided I would never accept a fraudulent moment again in my desire for a real faith. "God showed me how to seek his face and how to hear his voice in a dozen different ways, he wants us to have a real and tangible understanding of his intentions for us."⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Michael Van In, "I Worship the Living God and Am Allergic to Religiosity," Quora.com. Were you raised a Catholic and became Protestant Evangelical Christian or vice versa are you willing to relate your story? September 4, 2014, accessed July 19, 2018 <https://www.quora.com/Were-you-raised-a-Catholic-and-became-Protestant-Evangelical-Christian-or-vice-versa-Are-you-willing-to-relate-your-story>.

Chapter Seven

Islamism: Third Established Monotheistic Religion

The religion of *Islam* دین الاسلام is one of the three Old Testament faiths of the Bible, with its prominent figure, *Muhammad*, born in Saudi Arabia 570 A.D. Its founder and Last Prophet, *Muhammad* became a successful trader and skilled entrepreneur under his uncle's guidance in Mecca, an important cosmopolitan city on the trade routes of the region during *Muhammad's* day. Arabs in the epoch prior to *Muhammad*, were called the *jahiliyya* or those in the “Age of Ignorance,”² The term *islam* means submission to the will of *All'ah*, and the person who submits is called a *Muslim*. The religion is divided into *iman* إيمان (beliefs) and *deen* الدين (follower obligations), and the Five Pillars of *Islam*. They are: First Pillar, *All'ah* is the central doctrine of *Islam*, *All'ah* is One, and no partner is to be associated with him (e.g. Holy Spirit or Son)³; Second, a hierarchy of angels in the gap between *All'ah* and humankind, with Archangel Gabriel amongst the highest rank; Third, the prophets of *All'ah* according to the *Qur'an*, has sent one prophet to every nation to preach the message of only One God. In all, 124,000 prophets have been sent, each given a particular epoch, with *Muhammad* as the only Prophet who is for all time—considered to be the Seal of the Prophets; *Islam* values the holy books as the Fourth Pillar (Moses who was given the *Tawrat* (the *Torah*), King David who was given the Psalms, *Isa* (Jesus) who was given the Gospels, and *Muhammad* who was given the *Qur'an*; Fifth, is the Day of Judgement, where *All'ah* has decreed that day when all will stand before him in judgement.⁴

¹ Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 108; Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*.

² William E. Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 2nd ed., (New York: Routledge, 2014), 33; Age of Ignorance,” which applies to what was shown in the movie, *The Message*, as wild or excessive behavior: overindulgence to fight and to seeking revenge; a kind of anarchy reigned among tribes, including the law of blood revenge.

³ Parshall, *Bridges to Islam*.

⁴ Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 108; Tennent, “Followers of Jesus (Isa).”

The Prophet of *Islam*, *Muhammad*, brought sweeping change to seventh century Asia by transforming Arab religions, sociocultural traditions, familial settings, and tribal matters into submission to his new monotheistic philosophy: *Islam*.⁵ Thus, by one stroke, the most vital bond of Arab relationship, that of tribal kinship, was replaced by a new bond, that of a unified faith. Herein lies one of the chief claims of *Muhammad* to originality, a sort of *Pax Islamica* was instituted for Arabia. This new community was to have no priesthood, no hierarchy, no centrality, but would include a *mosque* مسجد (domed building) as its public forum and military drill ground, as well as its place of common worship. The leader in prayer is the *imam*, who also is the Commander in Chief of the Army of the Faithful, who were enjoined to protect one another against the entire world in *jihad* الجهاد (or holy war as seen with the Islamic State in Syria, ISIS). All Arabs who remained heathen, moderate, or opposed to monotheism were outside the pale, considered outlaws. *Islam* canceled the past laws: no wine, gambling, singing, or loose women, all were abolished in one verse.⁶

There are three major sects of *Islam*; like with Christianity and Judaism, with varying beliefs in salvation doctrine. The *Sunnis* emphasized the authority of the written traditions, which include not only the *Qur'an*, but also the *Sunna* (customs), from which the *Sunnis* derive their name. The *Shi'ites*, on the other hand, are more authority oriented, rather than census oriented. They believe that *All'ah* spoke through an *Iman*, the *Muslim* مسلم equivalent of the Catholic Pope. However, in the ninth century, the twelfth *Imam* occultated, and the source of authority was passed on to the *ulama*, who consider themselves collectively to be the general representatives of the Hidden *Imam*. The *Shi'ites* await the return of the twelfth *Imam* (*messiah*) called the *Mahdi*, similar to the way Christians look to the return of Christ. *Sufism* is the mystical third wing of

⁵ Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy*.

⁶ www.oneworldmagazine.org., accessed May 19,2018 <http://www.oneworldmagazine.org>.

Islam with the goal of renouncing worldly attachments, to see only *All'ah* in all things, and to attain assimilation of the self into the vast being of *All'ah*. There are other minor Muslim sects: *Wahhabis* in Saudi Arabia, *Druze* in Lebanon, *Alawites* in Syria, and *Ahmadiyahs* in Pakistan.⁷

Moderate Muslims

Schipper says that words, written and oral, are the primary medium by which the life of the prophet *Muhammad* has been transmitted across the generations. His biography and the thousands of individual reports of his utterances and actions are collected in *Hadith* literature.⁸ These were transmitted by early *Muslims* wishing to pass on *Muhammad's* tradition and mindful of the *Qur'an's* words: "Indeed in the Messenger of *All'ah*, you have a good example to follow for one who desires *All'ah* (*sura* 33:21). Eager to follow his divinely-inspired actions, his followers paid attention to his style of worship, his conduct, his personal hygiene, his interaction with children and neighbors. The Prophet's way of doing things, his *Sunnah*, has formed the basis for *Muslim* piety in all *Islamic* societies. The result was that as moderate, non-war-minded *Muslims*, young and old, rich and poor, adopted the prophet's *sunnah* as a model for their lives.⁹

Salvation by Submission to Islam

Ghattas and Ghattas, maintain the word *islām* means submission, and their Creed, "There is no Divinity other than *All'ah* and *Muhammad* is his Prophet." Orthodox *Muslims* see this Creed as the basic spirit of *Islam*, to recognize *All'ah* is One, and that the Prophet *Muhammad* is the only vehicle of revelation.¹⁰ In *sura*, 2 (*al-Baqara*):225, a throne verse, viewed as the most

⁷ Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 106.

⁸ Schipper, "From Milton to Modern Satanism."

⁹ www.pbs.org/muhammad, accessed May 24, 2018 http://www.pbs.org/muhammad/timeline_html.shtml.

¹⁰ Muhammad Nasr, "The Principles of Islam," 21-29, accessed May 1, 2018 <http://www.download-islamic-ebooks.com>.

important type verse in the *Qur'an*. This verse asks the critical question, “Who can be the intercessor between man and *All'ah*?”¹¹ Christians know that *Yahweh* chose *Isa* (Jesus), not *Muhammad*, to be the only intercessor since, Jesus Christ was sinless, born from a virgin mother, and did not carry the sin of the line of Adam.¹² *Sura*, 10 (*Yunus*):54-57, describes additional salvation by works, as part of *Islamic* theology, stating very visibly, that a soul cannot be ransomed by earthly possessions, but must depend on repentance and God's mercy. If this is true, why therefore is there a need for the scale at the end of the day to weigh the deeds of man?¹³

In *sura*, 9 (*Al-Tauba*):95-96, *All'ah* offers no forgiveness for repentance. The great paradox of this *sura* is reflected in *All'ah* telling *Muhammad*, that no matter how many excuses the people give him for not following him into *jihad*, even if they swear on *All'ah's* name, he is not to forgive them.¹⁴ *Sura* 9 (*Al-Tauba*):105 stresses salvation by works, saying *All'ah* will observe the work of the faithful: stressing salvation by works.¹⁵ Ironically, in the same *sura*, it instructs the followers of *Muhammad* to kill their neighbors, saying, *All'ah* is ordering the true believers, to kill their non-believing neighbors—and to do so harshly (9:123).¹⁶ *Sura*, 39 (*Al-Zumar*):37 is a very interesting verse, an assurance of salvation verse, that says, that if *All'ah* saves someone, no one can lead him astray.¹⁷

¹¹ Raouf Ghattas and Carol B. Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an: Building Bridges in Muslim Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009), 38.

¹² *Ibid.*, 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁴ *Sura* 4:48, N. J. Dawood, *The Koran*, (New York: Penguin Books Inc. 2003).

¹⁵ Ghattas and Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an: Building Bridges in Muslim Evangelism*, 119.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 121, here we find another paradox and Islam because in some places the Qur'an says to be good to our neighbors.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 253.

Most *Muslims* use these aforementioned verses extensively as a source of hope of making it to heaven after death.¹⁸ Solomon says, the soul that goes back to *Yahweh* without having accepted Christ, will never be content. Christians can show *Muslims* not to be ruled by rhythmic words: one cannot trust one's feelings or gamble eternal destiny on them. We as Christians need to make sure with our entire mind, soul, and body, that we will make it to heaven.¹⁹

Does Islamism Correlate with Salvation in Yahshua?

In the original Arabian environment, before *Muhammad's* time, there were men known as *hanifs* (religious seekers), who were capable of universal tolerance of other religious views and practices, sustains Shepard.²⁰ In 610 A.D. nomad tribes practiced both polytheism and mass paganism, with a god or idol for every imaginable need, with the symbol of *Islamic* civilization, the cube, the *Kaa'ba* located in Mecca.²¹ This giant black, cubic structure represents *All'ah* and the stability of which symbolizes the permanent and immutable character of *Islam*.²² The *Kaa'ba* housed 360 Egyptian and Pagan gods, with the *sunna* (way of life), included homogeneous values of *karim* كريم (generosity) courage, fortitude, and loyalty.²³ The trouble centered on the Wailing Wall of the Jews in Jerusalem, which the *Muslims* consider the halting place of the winged horse, with a woman's face, and peacock's tail, on which, *Muhammad* journeyed heavenward (*sura 17*).²⁴

¹⁸ Ghattas and Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an*, 375.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 377-78.

²⁰ Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 38.

²¹ *The Message*; www.pbs.org/muhammad.

²² Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 979-95; Marjana Harcet, "Perceptions of Islamic Soteriology and Its Interpretations," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 13, no. 38 (Summer, 2014): 39-56, accessed January 29, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1545343247?accountid=12085>.

²³ Shepard, *Introducing Islam* 18-33.

²⁴ www.oneworldmagazine.org.

The Prophet Muhammad: The Last Prophet

According to historians, in or about 571 A.D., a child was born to the *Quraysh*, a high-ranking tribe which was custodian of the *Kaa'ba*. His tribe called him *al-Amin* (the faithful), but the form which his name takes in the *Qur'an* is *Muhammad*. The baby's father *Abd Allah bin Al-Muttalib* died before his birth, and the mother *Amina bint Wabb* when he was about six years old.²⁵ *Muhammad ibn Abdullah* spent his early years as a boy helping his uncle. *Muhammad's* life was unremarkable, until he was visited in a desert cave by an angel, calling himself Gabriel (this cannot be verified as the angel Gabriel who came to Mary), who brought him a solemn message as recorded in *sura* 96:1-5. *Muhammad's* vision began the dawn of *Islam's* Prophet as the receiver of the 114 *suras* in the *Qur'an* and a new scheme of conversion.²⁶

He took about a dozen wives, some for love, others for political reasons: *Aishah* the young daughter of *abu-Bakr*; *Khadijah* bore him several children, none of whom survived him except *Fatimah*, later to be the famous spouse of *Ali*;²⁷ *Safiya* a Jewish teen; *Juwayriyyah* daughter of a tribal leader, and his own cousin.²⁸ *Muhammad* mourned bitterly the loss of his infant son *Ibrahim*, born to him by Mary, a Christian Coptic: astonishingly the same name as Jesus' mother.²⁹ In keeping with Meccan tradition, *Amina bint Wabb* entrusted her son at an early age to a wet nurse, named *Halima* from the nomadic tribe of the *Sa'd ibn Bakr*. He grew up in the hill country learning their pure Arabic.³⁰ In 610 Muhammad had a marked turn in his life, he

²⁵ www.oneworldmagazine.org.

²⁶ William Carey, "An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens," accessed January 15, 2015 www.wmcarey.edu/carey/enquiry/enquiry.html.

²⁷ Engelbrecht and Hahn. "Jesus as the Son of God."

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 402-03.

²⁹ Engelbrecht and Hahn. "Jesus as the Son of God."

³⁰ *Ibid.*

received what he believed to be a vision in an astatic state he believed the angel Gabriel visited him, according to Caner.³¹ The latter years of Islam's Prophet, he is known as the one whose face cannot be shown.³² The nature of *All'ah*, who is central to *Muhammad's* teaching, was a forced repudiation of all other gods. This was not just a repudiation of the polytheists, but also a rejection of the Jewish and Christian systems, including YAH. *Muhammad* believed that Judaism had the truth at one time, but was corrupted, and that Christianity had the truth at one time, but it too was corrupted. Therefore, Jews and Christians who do not convert to *Islam* will go to hell, as Christianity and Judaism are sister systems.³³

Muhammadian Islamic Momentum

Out of the religious community of Medina, the later and larger state of *Islam* arose. This new community of immigrants and supporters was established on the basis of religion, as the *Ummah*, or the congregation of *All'ah*. This was the first attempt in the history of Arabia at a social organization with religion, rather than blood, as its basis. *All'ah* was the personification of state supremacy, with his prophet, his legitimate vice-regent, and supreme ruler on earth. *Muhammad's* was an innovative monotheistic approach to the One God or *All'ah*, which had an epic shift in religious policy and belief systems amongst the surrounding *ethos*.³⁴ This made an impact on Southern Asian, causing a ripple effect that continues to this day.³⁵

In 628 *Muhammad* led 1,400 believers to the city of his birth and exacted the pact in which Meccans and *Muslims* were treated on equal terms. This treaty practically ended the

³¹ Caner, "Islam," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 278.

³² Engelbrecht and Hahn, "Jesus as the Son of God."

³³ Caner, "Islam," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 280.

³⁴ www.oneworldmagazine.org.

³⁵ Engelbrecht and Hahn, "Jesus as the Son of God."

conflict between *Muhammad* and his tribe, the *Quraysh*. Among other members of this tribe, *Kalid ibn-al-Walid* and *Amr ibn-al-As*, destined to become the two mighty swords of militant *Islam*, were about this time received as recruits to the great cause of *jihad*.³⁶ Two years later, toward the end of 630, the conquest of Mecca was complete. Entering the city and its great sanctuary, the *Kaa'ba*, *Muhammad* smashed all the idols but one, *All'ah* the Moon god, exclaiming: "Truth hath come, and falsehood hath vanished!"³⁷

The Significance of Radicalized Islam

The time of 630-631 A.D. are called the "years of delegations," during which delegations flocked from near and far to offer allegiance to *Muhammad*, the Prince-Prophet. Tribes joined out of convenience, if not conviction, and *Islam* contented itself with exacting a verbal confession of faith, and importantly, a payment of a tax. Groups came from distant Arabia, which had never bowed to a man, until now.³⁸ The reality is, *Muhammad* issued *hadiths* to suit his personal needs during combat operations to justify his actions. For example, *Muhammad* makes a decree: march to Medina and claim booty on the way; that is to say, their sword was to draw blood all the way to Medina. In the movie, *The Message*, it portrays this move as the *Hijra* (Emigration), as the most significant event in *Muhammad's* career.³⁹ *Muhammad* first announced his rules of *jihad* engagement through *Zayd*, *Muhammad's* adopted son, except "the *Qur'an* contradicts the movie, hence, the *Qur'an* orders *Muslims* to kill for *Islam*" (*sura* 4:76).⁴⁰

³⁶ Caner, "Islam," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 280.

³⁷ www.oneworldmagazine.org.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Ghattas and Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur'an*, 63; Hans Wijngaards, "Can We Trust the Gospels?: A Letter to My Muslim Brothers" *Answering Islam*, accessed April 23, 2017 <http://www.answeringislam.org/Bible/Text/wijngaards.html>.

⁴⁰ *Sura* 4:76; Dawood, *The Koran*.

In the tenth *Muslim* year, *Muhammad* headed triumphantly, the annual pilgrimage into his new religious capital, Mecca.⁴¹ A war broke out between the Arabs in Mecca, and the soldiers came from Medina with *Muhammad*, few faithful survived, yet seemed happy they lost their fellow soldiers during *jihad*, now in paradise. The *Muhammad* of *Qur'an* informs his believers that the blasphemers should be killed, in the name of *All'ah*, so that they will not corrupt others (*sura* 8:39);⁴² that "God is ordering the believers to kill their non-believing neighbors and to do so harshly" (*sura* 9:123), known as The Theory of Just War.⁴³ Prophet Muhammad's message before death, to the emperors of Egypt and Persia, was that he as *All'ah's* true messenger, was obliged to give these nations the opportunity to except *Islam* before the *Muslim* army committed any kind of conquest, reasons Caner and Harcet.⁴⁴ This proved his last visit and was styled the farewell pilgrimage, when just three months after his return to Medina, he took ill and died.

The *Qur'an* and Epistemological Research

When studying the *Qur'an*, it becomes clear the *Islamic* civilization is based on the revelation brought by the prophet *Muhammad*. Every major element: *islam*, unity, *All'ah*, the *Qur'an*, all stem from *Muhammad* and his religion of worshiping One God. The separation lies in how one views *Muhammad* and his religion of submission. Some like Nasr, an *Islamist*, in his piece, "The Principles of Islam," lectures that "*Islam* is the pure and simple religion of Adam and Abraham, the restoration of a primordial and fundamental unity."⁴⁵ *Muhammad* concluded

⁴¹ www.oneworldmagazine.org.

⁴² *The Message*.

⁴³ The Theory of Just War (Jus Bellum).

⁴⁴ Caner, "Islam," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 277-81; Harcet, "Perceptions of Islamic Soteriology and Its Interpretations," he died complaining of severe headache on 6.8.632.

⁴⁵ Nasr, "The Principles of Islam," 21-29; www.oneworldmagazine.org; Hassan, "Salvation and the 'Other' in Islamic Thought; Harcet, "Perceptions of Islamic Soteriology and Its Interpretations."

treaties of peace with the Christian chief of *al- Aqabah* and the Jewish tribes in the oases of *Maqna*, *Adhruh* and *Jarba* to the south. The native Jews and Christians were taken under the protection of the newly arising *Islamic* community in consideration of *jizyah*, a land tax.⁴⁶

Lance affirms there is over-whelming historical, textual, and archaeological evidence to substantiate, that the word, *'allah* has a designation of deity, and was in use before the time of *Muhammad*, as the name of the moon god: one of 360 gods, known in Arabia as *'ilah*.⁴⁷ This theory essentially understands *Muhammad* as taking a general pagan word for deity, and upgrading it to be a sovereign, exalted creator.⁴⁸ *Hamza*, *Muhammad's* other uncle, along with many soldiers faithful to *Muhammad*, were the first martyrs of *Islam*, then fleeing to a Christian King in Abyssinia, who was foretold to be a believer in “The Book of the One God.” This kind King gave them protection, where the elites boasted, “gods are for worship and for revenue.”⁴⁹

Revealed in the *Qur'an*, the word *all'ah*, was used to translate the broad concept of God, and was not used to translate the personal, covenantal name revealed to Moses, YHWH. In *sura* 29:46, *All'ah* instructs *Muhammad* to say to both Jews and Christians: “We believe in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to you. Our God and your God is[sic] one,” which completely contradicts *sura* 5:51 cited earlier. The word *all'ah* originally was the name of the moon god worshipped in Arabia at the time of *Muhammad*, with a crescent moon as a common symbol of the moon god, known in Arabia as *'ilah*.⁵⁰ *Muhammad* took this generic word for god,

⁴⁷ Hubert Darrell Lance, "Archaeology of the Bible: Book by Book," *Interpretation* 33, no. 1 (January 1979): 78-80, accessed February 19, 2018 EBSCOhost. <https://artsandsciences.sc.edu/appalachianenglish/node/793>.

⁴⁸ Caner, “Islam,” in Hindson, and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 277-81; Dayton K. Hartman II, “Answering Muslim Objections to the Trinity,” *Answering Islam*, accessed April 23, 2017, from http://www.answeringislam.org/authors/hartman/trinity_objections.html.

⁴⁹ *The Message*.

⁵⁰ Tennent, “Followers of Jesus (Isa),” 25-51, Since the crescent moon is a key symbol for *Islam*, on signs, *mosques*, flags, most everything Islamic, evidence to the connection between the moon god, and *All'ah*.

'ilah or 'a god' and put a definite article on the front to make it 'al 'ilah, meaning 'the one god,' and with contraction and usage, the two words were joined, eventually becoming All'ah.⁵¹

Within a brief span of mortal life, *Muhammad* called forth out of unpromising material, a nation never united before, in a country that was previously a geographical expression; established a religion which in vast areas superseded Christianity and Judaism. Himself an unschooled man, *Muhammad* was nevertheless responsible for a book still considered by one-seventh of mankind as the embodiment of all science, wisdom and theology.⁵² Salvation can be found by adhering to The Five Pillars of *Islam*: an allegiance to All'ah alone by *kalima* كلمة (sworn creed), recitation of prayers five times a day facing Mecca (*salat*), paying alms or taxes of one-fortieth to the *Mosque* (*zakat*), mandatory fasting (*sawn*), and an obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*): thus, comprising the first level of *jihad* or inner struggle, says, Caner, in "Islam."⁵³ Shepard contends, by age forty, *Muhammad* gained a reputation for honesty and was known as *al-amin* or "The Faithful One."⁵⁴ However, out of this self-proclaimed prophet, said for all to hear, "I am the prophet of God and even I don't know what will become of me?"⁵⁵ Some saw him as a devout opportunist, driven by an unstoppable force, contradictory in his words and actions, and quite pitiless. In a cave, where he often sought time away for meditation, a voice says to him, "Read." Muhammad replies, "I cannot read."⁵⁶ Why would an angel tell an illiterate Arab to not have a personal relationship with the Hebrew God or a Christian, or anything to do with

⁵¹ Ibid. Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa)," 25-51.

⁵² www.oneworldmagazine.org.

⁵³ Caner, in "Islam." Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 278.

⁵⁴ Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 34.

⁵⁵ *The Message*.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Christianity, or the belief that Jesus was the only begotten Son of God? This is *shirk* المتهرّب (blasphemy) in the Qur'an (5:72) and is punishable as apostasy by *Sharia* law.⁵⁷

Stories of Conversion

According to Christian Freedom International, as many as 91,000 *Muslims* across Bangladesh have converted to Christianity in the last six years. Pastor Faruk al-Ahmed, a Christian convert from *Islam*, who has been preaching since the mid-1990s, personally attested to the rise of Christianity in his own community in Northern Bangladesh during an interview with the British news site, Express.⁵⁸ Conversion is not forbidden by law, but pressure to recant the Christian faith is be exerted by family, friends and neighbors. There have been several reports of Christians having to give up their shops or businesses due to the pressure by the *Muslim* majority, the Open Doors reports.⁵⁹

The Apostle Paul confesses with all those who converted from Judaism and *Islam* to Christ: For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered (Ps. 44:22), but, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us (Rom. 8:36-37). The apostle of the nations confirmed this confession by his death when he was beheaded in the year 63 A.D., just like James, the brother of Jesus a year earlier. The risen Lord gives some of His followers the privilege of participating in His suffering (Rom. 5:3-5; Phil. 1:20-23; 2:16-17; Col. 1:24; 2 Tm. 2:10-13; 1 Pt. 4:16-19). A *Muslim* rejects any concept of the divinity of Jesus Christ, which with this attitude, will exclude himself from recognizing and knowing *Yahweh* as Father, Son *Yahshua*, and the Holy Spirit. He denies justification by grace

⁵⁷ Caner, "Islam," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 277-81; Engelbrecht and Hahn, "Jesus as the Son of God."

⁵⁸ Smith, "Thousands of Muslims Converting to Christianity in Bangladesh Despite Rising Persecution."

⁵⁹ Ibid.

and does not want to hear much of the privilege of rebirth. A witness for Christ must ask Jesus for ways to persuade *Muslims* that He is the Son of *Yahweh* who has saved us from our sins.⁶⁰

All'ah has predestined everything, demands total submission of everyone, is not a god of boundless love, seduces whomever he wants, and he guides rightly whomever he wants, *sura 6 (al-An'am):39*. He is not a god of truth, because he calls himself the most cunning [sly and crafty] of all *sura 3 (Al 'Imran):54*; he is the proud one *sura 59 (al-Hashr):23*; and his mercy is bestowed only on obedient *Muslims* who offer their money and fight for the spread of *Islam*, *sura 2 (al-Baqara):195*. The spirit of *Islam* hates the Father, YAH, the Son *Yahshua*, and rejects the Trinity absolutely, *sura 112 (al-Ikhlās):1-4*.⁶¹ The authenticity of the Bible is a barrier that makes it nearly impossible for a *Muslim* to believe in *Yahweh*, is his or her deep suspicion that the Bible is forged. By this belief, the spirit of *Islam* has canceled out the trust of many *Muslims* in the *Torah* and in the Gospel. They believe that whatever the Jews and the Christians say, are fairy tales and errors. In *Islam*, there is no salvation, no assurance that one's sins are forgiven, no chance of redemption, no peace in God, and no promise life everlasting.⁶² Only The Son of God can say, "I am The Way, and The Truth, and The Life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6).

I was born in Iran into a very religious *Muslim* family. I learned about the Christian faith from school and parents. They taught me that Jesus was the fourth major prophet, *Muhammad* being the fifth and the last. I understood that Christians believed in three gods: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, which was very confusing. In 1979 after the

⁶⁰ Abd al-Masih, al-Masih, "Conversation with Muslims About Christ: Should Every Muslim Who Becomes a Christian Die?" *Grace and Truth*, (July 25, 2014), accessed July 18, 2018 <http://www.grace-and-truth.org/USA-Conv8-ShouldEveryMuslimWhoBecomesAChristianDie-Booklet.htm>.

⁶¹ al-Masih, "Conversation with Muslims About Christ, also see *al-Ra'd* 13:27; *Ibrahim* 14:4; *al-Nahl* 16:93; *al-Fatir* 35:8; *al-Muddathir* 74:31.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Iranians attacked the American Embassy and took Americans hostages, my doctors told me that I was depressed. So, I fasted many times, and I prayed, and cried to *All'ah*, but he never answered. I arrived at my aerobics class early, and I listened attentively to the devotions which I had never done before. Then they prayed for me, taking my problems before their God. They called Him Jesus, and they called Him Father, then a woman read Matthew 18:20, and the name of Jesus stayed with me as I left the class. On the way home, as I talked to Jesus, I started to cry. I said to him, If you really are God, then all of this time I was wrong. As I turned each problem over to Jesus I began to feel lighter and lighter. The depression and anxiety gradually disappeared. "My feelings of depression and frustration were gone. I asked Jesus for a "drink of water, and He gave me a full cup!" He has proven Himself to be my provider and my sufficiency. He has given me His strength so that I don't bend under the weight of worries and cares. He has given me joy in the midst of tears. He has promised me that He will never leave me not forsake me! I don't have just a God - I HAVE A HEAVENLY FATHER!"⁶³

Abu Radwan enters a church on the outskirts of Beirut with his wife and two kids. His wife removes the black headscarf covering her hair. It was here, a year and a half ago, that they converted to Christianity. "Of course, it was a difficult decision," *Abu Radwan* says. "I was born into a *Muslim* family." The family is from the city of Homs in Syria. They sought refuge in Lebanon at the beginning of the war. Then two years ago, *Abu Radwan* says Jesus appeared to him in a dream. It's illegal, or at least dangerous, for *Muslims* to convert in those *Muslim*-majority countries. "The Lord said go and teach them. I'm leading them in the Bible," the pastor says. "I'm teaching them Christian doctrines." The pastor doesn't want to be identified, and the

⁶³ Lucinda Halimeh Borkett-Jones, "Testimony of Halimeh: I used to be a Christian but converted to Islam" ChristianToday.com, *Iranian Christians International* (April 1999), accessed July 18, 2018 <https://www.answering-islam.org/Testimonies/halimeh.html>.

church asked us not to mention its name. They fear reprisal from radical *Islamist* groups like ISIS. “I want to get out of Lebanon,” he says. “I want to emigrate. I’ve tried all ways.” *Abu Radwan* says the attackers were Syrians from his tribe; they don’t accept his conversion. It’s why his wife still wears a *hijab* outside of church. It has also made going home to Syria almost impossible. His tribe, he says, has issued an order to kill him. But he doesn’t regret his conversion. “I was relieved when I was baptized,” he says. “If I die, now, I die in peace.”⁶⁴

Recently at World Magazine, writer Warren Cole Smith interviewed 25-year missionary David Garrison, who has documented his findings about the *Muslim* conversion phenomenon. “There is a revival in the *Muslim* world,” Garrison says. He believes between two and seven million former *Muslims* have converted to Christianity in the past two decades.⁶⁵ *Nabeel Qureshi*, a popular speaker and author, explains that online testimonies state, that the Gospel is being proclaimed with great effectiveness. *Qureshi* affirms that the Holy Spirit works primarily by and through Scripture, and in his own experience, he says, subjective visions about Christ were also steps in his conversion from *Islam* to faith in Christ. Open Doors USA recently reported a remarkable conversion story of a former *Muslim* man in Iran named *Taher*. He would beat his family and threaten to kill them because of their faith in Jesus. After *Taher's* family fled abroad, in his growing despair he cried out: "I will believe in the God who reveals Himself to me." According to his story, the living God answered his prayers through a dream.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Rebecca Collard, “Why Some Muslim Syrian Refugees are Converting to Christianity” PRI’s The World, March 2017, *Public Radio International*, accessed July 18, 2018, from <https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-03-02/why-some-muslim-syrian-refugees-are-converting-christianity>.

⁶⁵ Alex Crain, “Millions of Muslims Converting to Christianity,” *crosswalk.com* (July 29, 2014), accessed July 18, 2018 <https://www.crosswalk.com/blogs/christian-trends /millions-of-muslims-converting-to-christ.html>.; Schultz, and Lavenda, *Cultural Anthropology*.

⁶⁶ Crain, “Millions of Muslims Converting to Christianity.”

Chrislam

Chrislam is *Islam* and Christianity combined. The god of *Islam*, *All'ah*, a singular unity with no partner; whereas Christianity's God, *Yahweh*, is a compound unity that is One essence, but three in person.⁶⁷ Sin in *Islam* is thought of in terms of rejecting right guidance, but no atonement is necessary. In Christianity, sin is serious enough to causing spiritual death (Rom. 6:23; Eph. 2:1), reflecting an attitude of moral rebellion against a Holy God, which causes one to be alienated, and atonement is necessary before a relationship with *Yahweh* can be restored. Salvation in *Islam* is based on human effort, having one's good deeds outweigh one's bad deeds. Christianity's standard for salvation is the absolute Holiness (Mt. 5:48), therefore it can only be offered as a gift by *Yahweh* based on His grace and Jesus' atoning work, received through faith, not by works, argues, Hartman.⁶⁸ Jesus (*Isa* in Islam) is one of the major prophets, but to associate Jesus with God for instance, to say He's the Son of God is blasphemy.⁶⁹ Christianity holds that the one and only Son of God is *Yahshua*; John wrote, who is the liar it is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ, such a man is the Antichrist, he denies the Father and Son (1 Jn. 2:22).⁷⁰ So then, Chrislam is the joining of these two very opposed belief systems. How can this possibly be reconciled to truth, if both claim exclusiveness? Or, is this the breakdown of truth?

The Breakdown of Absolute Truth

Those who regard the possibility that all religions are true, might be religious pluralists, who tend to employ diversion strategies. One such approach, says that we should stop thinking about religious truth in propositional terms, and recognize that religiously speaking, it is personal

⁶⁷ Hartman II, "Answering Muslim Objections to the Trinity."

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Tennent, "Followers of Jesus (Isa)."

⁷⁰ Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 107; Wijngaards, "Can We Trust the Gospels?"

lives that are either true or false, opines, Evans and Manis.⁷¹ It is quite right to stress that religious truth must be personally appropriated. In one sense of the word, one might appropriately speak of a person's life being true, furthermore, there is no necessary correlation between the objective truth of a proposition, and the truth of the life of someone who accepts that proposition. It seems conceivable that a person might believe correct religious truth, yet personally, live falsely because of lack of interiorization of that truth.⁷²

The Philosophy of Religion

Certain kinds of questions are asked by almost all human beings who have reached a level of reflectiveness: Who am I? What kind of world do I live in? What is worth living for? These foundational questions have a universal significance, and they properly inspire the deepest and most rigorous kind of thinking. When answers to these and other questions are comprehensive and organized, they become philosophies. In this case it is religious philosophy, but not indistinguishable from philosophy of religion, which is a form of reflection, self-conscious and critical, building systems of thought, and carefully reflecting on those systems. It is the critical and reflective side of philosophy that is most evident in philosophy of religion, which is not labeled as religious thinking, but is focused solely on religion(s), and thinking on such to be carried out by both religious and non-religious persons.⁷³ The philosophy of religion is like meta-apologetics, it is a second-order discipline that analyzes the basic concepts, themes, and religious traditions, as well as the arguments for and against the claims made by adherents of those religious traditions: whether their truth claims prove valid and reliable, or not.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 211.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 212.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 22; Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy*.

⁷⁴ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 31

Chapter Eight

Epistemological Significance in Religion

Gordon Lewis postulates, religious epistemology is subjective truth according to beliefs about how one acquires religious knowledge.¹ Wood orates more simply, epistemology is how we know what we know. It is in human beings that heaven and earth meet in thought.² We are made in God's image, and are personal beings who can, but not always, detect God's fingerprints in creation, or His voice, or His conscience through Scripture. Humans were designed to know God, ourselves, others, and God's extended creation. As James Sire puts it, human beings can know both the world around them, and God Himself, because God has built into humans the capacity to do so, and because He takes an active role in communicating with them.³

Wood claims reformed epistemology argues that secular thought has placed an undue burden on Christian apologetics. It demands that Christians offer proof for their beliefs, otherwise they risk being irrational.⁴ Alvin Plantinga has extensively argued, that this demand is based on a self-refuting epistemology known as classical, or narrow foundationalism. According to Plantinga, traditional strategies for defending these beliefs do not offer enough rational justification to make them convincing. Given Plantinga's system, philosophy is unable to pronounce on the truth of Christianity, it can only render it rational to believe.⁵ Plantinga had developed reformed epistemology as a line of response to Evidentialism.⁶ It follows in the

¹ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 94.

² Jay W. Wood, *Epistemology: Becoming Intellectually Virtuous* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics* 80; Richards and O'Brien, *Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes*.

⁴ Wood, *Epistemology*.

⁵ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 68.

⁶ Wood, *Epistemology*; Plantinga, *Knowledge and Christian Belief*.

tradition of the Protestant reformer and theologian, John Calvin, in that its new view holds a belief in God can be rationally justified apart from any arguments or evidence, because it is, or can be, properly basic, suggests Plopeanu.⁷ A belief is basic for a person, if he or she does not hold it solely on the basis of other beliefs that are held; and, if it is also rationally justified for him or her, despite lack of support from other beliefs. A classical foundationalist, according to Evans, Manis, and Netland, regard objective certainty as an epistemic ideal; those rationally justified beliefs that are supported ultimately by foundational beliefs, which are themselves absolutely certain or indubitable, as Descartes put it.⁸

Epistemology and Theories of Truth

Wood asks, “What is truth?”⁹ The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy defines epistemology as the theory of knowledge, or how we came to know what we know. How do we know, for example, that our senses are not fooling us in terms of what they tell us is the reality actually around us?¹⁰ Truth is what matters most, particularly truth concerning our human condition in the world, its origin, its nature, purpose if any, and its destiny. Knowing the truth and living according to its requirements should be the hope and aspiration of the reflective person. Only our knowledge of truth, and our awareness of reality, can help resolve the inner bickering between the claims of hope and the fears of despair, says Groothuis.¹¹ What is meant when we say

⁷ Plopeanu and Pohoata, "Religion as a Major Institution in the Emergence and Expansion of Modern Capitalism."

⁸ Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 191-92; Harold A. Netland, *Christianity and Religious Diversity: Clarifying Christian Commitments in a Global Age* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 203. To see why Plantinga thinks that some beliefs are properly basic, one must return to a discussion on foundationalism, which is the approach to knowledge that underlies and motivates the evidentialist challenge.

⁹ Wood, *Epistemology*.

¹⁰ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 608; Palmer, *Looking at Philosophy*.

¹¹ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 16.

Christian beliefs are true?¹² When the quest for truth is successful, the virtuous person is humbled, not puffed up with pride. We do not create the truth, we can only discover it; and those who discover the great things of the Gospel, finds a humbling truth. Scripture promises that confident knowledge of God is possible for all humans (Rom. 8:15-16), “for anyone to enjoy the grandeur and largeness of the world, he must be always making himself small.”¹³

The nature of truth is critical to an effective Christian ministry. If we are to have a workable Gospel, it is not enough that we simply say that a given statement is true, it is also essential that we have some notion of what we mean when we say that something is true, that is, what kind of thing truth is.¹⁴ Thomas Provenzola, in his “Theories of Truth,” emphasizes its equally significant that we offer objective reasons for what we mean by truth, and that others can see for themselves why truth must be understood in these terms. If religious statements are true in a way that is different from what we ordinarily mean when we say something is true, we then have a challenging mission of determining in what way religious truth differs, from the normal or individual understanding of truth.¹⁵ Truth is logical, and logic presupposes that truth is real. All thought and knowledge require logic, and logic assumes both the existence of a reality, and ways to describe that reality. Norman Geisler and Ronald Brooks explain, that, first principles, such as logic, which are the starting point of all truth, as well as the foundation of all thought, are these kinds of statements; ones that cannot be denied without affirming their truth.¹⁶

¹² Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 160.

¹³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 148.

¹⁴ Rathel, “Theories of Salvation,” 29-31.

¹⁵ Thomas Provenzola, “Theories of Truth,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 478.

¹⁶ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 611.

Correspondence with reality, in the field of philosophical apologetics, assumes the Correspondence Theory of Truth, affirming that no statement or position can be true, if it does not square with the way the real world is. This serves as a reality check on the assumption of rationality, that one can build a rational argument that works internally, but which has no relationship to the real world, declares, David Wheeler, in “Apologetics, Incarnational.”¹⁷ In this case, correspondence is a much more difficult concept when applied to non-empirical statements such as, the monotheistic God of Biblical Christianity exists.¹⁸ According to Provenzola, this theory upholds, when something strikes us as being rationally unobjectionable, as the law of noncontradiction, we then tend to think it corresponds with reality, so we dare not assume that there is not a correspondence between non-empirical statements about God, and the world, simply because we have no empirical way of verifying it.¹⁹ Because of the conflation of truth and justification, often confusing ontology with epistemology, the correspondence theory is rejected by some, in favor of a more coherent and toothsome theory of truth.²⁰ The Coherence Theory of Truth argues, that a given statement is true if it coheres with, or does not contradict, any other statements, within a set of statements that also cohere with each other. Truth then, is what is internally consistent, and is initially appealing because it seems to get around the aforementioned gap between justification and truth.²¹ Then there is The Pragmatic Theory of Truth, flatly denying that we have truth, when our statements about the world describe the world accurately.

¹⁷ David Wheeler, “Apologetics, Incarnational,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 52.

¹⁸ Provenzola, “Theories of Truth,” in *Ibid.*, 478-79; Studygodsword.com.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* in *Ibid.*, 480-81.

²⁰ Wood, *Epistemology*.

²¹ Provenzola, “Theories of Truth,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 480-81.

Simply said, the best that we can do is to find some useful way to deal with reality. A person's statement is true, if, it serves some social function, or some practical utility, that is, if it was workable or usable to one's ends.²²

The Principle of Sufficient Reason

The Principle of Sufficient Reason differs from theories of truth, in that it is a principle accepted in philosophical arguments, which states, that anything that happens does so for a definite reason. It is usually attributed to Gottfried Leibniz, who formulated the principle as follows: "There must be a sufficient reason [often known only to God] for anything to exist, for any event to occur, for any truth to obtain."²³ The principle has a variety of expressions; however, perhaps best summarized this way: For every entity X, if X exists, then there is a sufficient explanation why X exists. A sufficient explanation may be understood in terms of reasons or causes, and history says Leibniz did not carefully distinguish between the two.²⁴

Evidence, or sufficient reasons for believing in God's existence, come not from our ability to solve all problems of logic and language, but by guidance for believing in a Holy God's existence from three major sources. In simple terms, these evidences are: The nature of the universe that exists is wholly contingent and in no sense necessary, in either form or substance; Mind, rationality, and a spiritual nature exist in humans; and The unique spiritual experiences that form the historical basis for Christian faith are real, documented, and testable through historical analysis, and through personal spiritual conformational experiences, states Bush.²⁵

²² Provenzola, "Theories of Truth," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 480-81.

²³ McDowell, and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 610-13.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ L. Russ Bush, *The Advancement: Keeping the Faith in an Evolutionary Age* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2003).

The Prerequisite of Truth

Barna and Hatch ask questions of truth in the realm of ideas, and the encroachment of postmodern thinking that is eroding traditional ideas of truth. Since the Gospel is a message of truth, this trend will have a potentially huge impact on the missionary effort. According to a Barna and Hatch, in a 2001 poll, only 49% of Born Again Christians except that moral truth is absolute, and just 33% of secular Americans.²⁶ Fred Smith, in his “Philosophical Apologetics,” emphasizes the importance of showing that the Christian worldview is indeed reasonable. Undergirding this effort is an assumption: the confidence of knowing that in the end, faith and reason are not in conflict, and while faith may go beyond reason, it is not irrational to believe that God reconciled us to Himself through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18), and in fact, such belief is perfectly in accord with reason. A Christian worldview seeks to encourage people to look at objective truth, to evaluate their current beliefs, and to established grounds for knowledge.²⁷

All Three Religions Have Truth

Could just one religion be true? The pluralism that faces the contemporary Christians is intensely evident in the existence of other persuasive religions. With all the varieties of the worlds three largest monotheistic faiths: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, it is reasonable to see how one can wholeheartedly commit oneself to just one of these religions; but, could any one of these contain the final absolute truth? An increasing number of people feel the answer is no, for the reasons and concerns about tolerance and arrogance, which this thesis discusses, thus, it is not arrogant to claim that one's own religion contains the final truth? Or, is such a claim intolerant?²⁸

²⁶ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 14.

²⁷ Fred Smith, “Apologetics, Philosophical,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 53.

²⁸ John D. Cone, and Sharon L. Foster, *Dissertations and theses from start to finish: Psychology and related fields*, 2nd ed., (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2006).

Evans and Manis postulate, that missionary activity, and proselytizing in general, should be replaced by mutual respect and dialogue, lecture too many religious thinkers. The view that one religion contains the final truth seems provincial, surely, God has not limited His revelation to one geographical section or ethnic group.²⁹

It seems logical to accept the notion that truth can mean different things to different people, in spite of various disagreements as to what essentially truth is. If this were the case, one could hardly expect to arrive at any kind of agreement, except by accident, or coincidence.³⁰ Concepts of a monotheistic God is opposed to, and divergent from, other theologies, such as: polytheism, henotheism, pantheism, panentheism, dualism, monism, agnosticism, and naturalism which is in essence, atheism. Monotheism in Christianity holds that only one God exists and is seen as a personal Being; the Supreme power, knowledge, and moral worth; and Who created all other existing beings. Of the other two monotheistic religions, Judaism believes the very same thing about God, YAH the Creator, the Father; however, Islam believes most of the same, but alters in its belief about the personality and the characteristics of an all-knowing, all-wise God, or who they call *All'ah*, their supreme divine being, asserts Evans & Manis.³¹

To go into this a bit deeper, the theistic concept of God, all of the various views of monotheism or theism, Christianity holds *Yahweh* in special importance as the dominant view of God of these three world religions. Views of God that seem to appropriate theism are also found, but none as predominant as the other two mainstream religions, Judaism and Islam.³² There has emerged a reasonably well-defined list of characteristics that are seen as being essential to God.

²⁹ Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 211.

³⁰ Provenzola, "Theories of Truth," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 478.

³¹ Evans, and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 36.

³² Hassan, "Salvation and the 'Other' in Islamic Thought."

Some of these characteristics are more central than others, but whatever else God may be, God is conceived as a being worthy of worship, and the Supreme object of religious devotion. This requirement plays a key role in the refinement of the theistic concept of God, with a minimal requirement that He be greater than any other being. God's power, knowledge, and goodness are seen as being maximal: God is omnipotent, possessing all power; God is omniscient, knowing everything that is possible to know; God is morally perfect with goodness unsurpassable; God is infinite; a necessary being not threatened by any other being, or god.³³

Christian Truth

Paul's approach focused on finding common ground with those challenging the Christian faith before speaking the truths. Paul often used a neutral description in order to build a bridge to conversion, instead of erecting a wall.³⁴ Groothuis makes the point, that "Christian witnesses should always try to find the scattered elements of truth embedded within darkened worldviews."³⁵ This researcher believes we were created to question and choose which is truth, and which is not. Beilby identifies those on the other side of the debate, by describing our audience this way, "the fact that a belief of yours is intuitively appealing and pragmatically useful might give you some reasons to believe that it is true, but it is not true just because it is intuitively appealing or pragmatically useful."³⁶ Christians need to be wise, humble, and ready to defend our Savior and Father, just as the Disciples did after Jesus died and rose again.³⁷ Anyone is bound to question their beliefs at some point, whether "they verbally express those questions

³³ Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 38.

³⁴ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 35.

³⁵ Ibid., 36; William Hasker, *Metaphysics: Constructing a World View* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1983).

³⁶ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 21.

³⁷ Brown, "George W. Bush: New Crusade Converting Jews to Christianity,"

or not, regardless of the strength of their faith,”³⁸ providing the Christian witnesses with pointed objections.³⁹ After all, says Beilby, the goal of one’s belief in The One True God, *Yahweh*, and “commend the truthfulness of Christian belief.”⁴⁰

McDowell and McDowell contend, that some scholars have taken to defending the Biblical idea of truth, noticing a need to explain how the Bible views truth, that although the Bible does not explicitly articulate theory, for example, the Correspondence Theory of Truth, it indirectly assumes correspondence principles throughout its pages. One example that directly employs the test of correspondence, applies it in determining whether a prophet has truly spoken from God: if the word does not come to pass, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken (Dt. 18:22).⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas asserts, that “truth is defined by the conformity of intellect and thing; and hence, to know this conformity is to know truth,” and more recently, Paul Copan, defines truth especially clearly: “a belief, description, or story that matches the way things truly are.”⁴²

The Redemptive Mission of Christ

Groothuis points out, that the center of the Christian message is the redemptive death of Jesus Christ.⁴³ Redemptive analogies are a powerful strategy to detract from truth, and found in the identities of: the *sawi, damal, hai, Dani, asmat, yali, osuwa*, asserts, Richardson.⁴⁴ Although

³⁸ Brown, “George W. Bush: New Crusade Converting Jews to Christianity.”

³⁹ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 55.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴¹ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, 618; Studygodsword.com.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 609.

⁴³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 496.

⁴⁴ Don Richardson in Ralph D. Winter, and Steven Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement: A Reader*, 4th ed., (Waynesboro: William Carry Press, 2009), 436.

the monotheistic religions claim that God influences the world, Christianity is unique, claiming that Father God became a human being, in *HaKadosh* (The Holy One), *Ben HaElohim* (the Son of God), Jesus Christ, exclusive in history, for the purpose of human redemption.⁴⁵ The Bible declares no one is morally or spiritually worthy of redemption, nor can anyone claim it as a right or entitlement. Given the truth and rationality of the Christian worldview, it is impossible that anyone can be redeemed, except through the mediation of Jesus Christ (Mt. 11:27). He alone is the source of reconciliation with God, atonement and forgiveness of sins, justification before God, and adoption into God's eternal family, yet some will resist and remained unrepentant.⁴⁶

Elkins is critical of earlier colonial Christian missionaries, who neglected to learn the traditions and cultural needs, through which, God's message salvation should have been good news; however, the message that resonated was perceived as bad news, due to anti-cultural mores.⁴⁷ Missionaries have sometimes acted in a destroying manner to an *ethne* culture, whether through misinterpreting the Great Commission, extreme culture shock, or simply an inability to comprehend the values of others, according to Richardson and Howell.⁴⁸ In the Luusanne Committee Occasional Paper 39, are first-hand narratives of incarnational missionary life. One such story is local missional congregations praying with those outside the community; like Catherine, a Christian in Pakistan in the hospital, and Dawit Johannes Wario, who is pastor of the Ethiopian Evangelical *Mekane Yesus* Tabor Congregation in Awassa, Ethiopia.⁴⁹ According to the narratives, these missional stories have a universally strong point to make about the

⁴⁵ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 585.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 590; Hasker, *Metaphysics*.

⁴⁷ Phillip Elkins, "Case Studies," in Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 678.

⁴⁸ Richardson, in *Ibid.*, 486; Howell and Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*.

⁴⁹ Elkins, "Case Studies," in Winter and Hawthorne, *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 678.

to the narratives, these missional stories have a universally strong point to make about the salvation message. One of the real strengths of the Luusanne Paper 89 is the consistency of Scripture to back up concepts, capitals to emphasize the Deity of Christ, and the importance of His Word.⁵⁰ “God's Spirit waits in eager anticipation of the day, when the local congregation and missional organizations will truly partner together.” declares Travis and Brawley.⁵¹

The Son of God

Beilby asks, What is meant when we say, Christian beliefs are true? The correspondence theory understands truth, as a relation between statements, such as, Jesus is the Son of God, and reality.⁵² Jesus, the Son of God, is full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14), and declared Himself to be the way, truth, and life, with exclusive rights to having a right standing with the Father (Jn. 14:6; Jer. 8:8; Mt. 24:24; 1 Jn. 4:1-6).⁵³ McDowell posits, if it be asked how the resurrection of Christ is a proof of His being the Son of God, it may be answered thusly, He rose by His own power, He had the power to lay down His life, and He had the power to take it up again.⁵⁴ The theology of the Bible itself, represents Jesus as the Son of God (Jn. 5:17-47), who possesses all the attributes of deity: He is eternal (Heb. 1:10), He is Lord (Rom. 10:9), He is Omnipotent (Jn. 11:1-44), He is Omnipresent (Mt. 28:20), He is Immutable (Heb. 13:8), He is the Forgiver of sins (Mk. 2:5-6), and the object of worship (Jn. 9:38) preaches, Ed Hindson, in the “Divinity of Christ.”⁵⁵ Christ had openly declared Himself to be the Son of God, and His rising from the dead

⁵⁰ Luusanne Committee Occasional Paper 39. Introduction, 1.0.

⁵¹ Ibid.; Travis, “Messianic Muslim Followers of Isa”; Brawley, “Grafted In.”

⁵² Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 160.

⁵³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 127.

⁵⁴ McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 248.

⁵⁵ Ed Hindson, “Divinity of Christ,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 123; Ott, Strauss, and Tennent, *Encountering Theology of Mission*.

was the Seal of God to the truth of that declaration.⁵⁶ Christianity cannot be reduced to a common core that is shared with other religions, yet, “no human being can come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ through one’s own intellectual or scientific reflection/investigation. Look at the apostles response to Jesus question “Whom do men say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13-20). While some referred to Jesus as prophet Elijah, or Jeremiah it was Apostle Peter who answered “ You are the Christ, the son of the Living God”. Upon Peters response Jesus assured Peter that flesh and blood did not reveal that to him but His heavenly Father did. Missiologist Jones Kaleli in reflecting on the ontology of Jesus for an ethnic community underscores that, “ All men of all cultures can only know this Jesus through divine revelation. Hence God’s revelation in/of Christ is not common knowledge to any people. It is foreign.... Jesus must be revealed to us by the heavenly Father.”⁵⁷

Jewish Truth

The truth is not in favor of non-*Yahshua* believing Jews, says Isaiah, “Israel, you have forgotten God, who saves you (Is. 17:10, NIRV). The *Messianic* identification of the Servant in Isaiah 53 has a long history in both Judaism and Christianity, but what is missing in the ancient Jewish discussions, is this text is of a suffering *Messiah*.⁵⁸ Judaism interprets Isaiah 53 to refer to an exalted *Messiah* who delivers the suffering Israel; and they are correct, but about His second coming, and Wolff argues, that Jesus did indeed interpret His mission from Isaiah 53.⁵⁹ Jesus was

⁵⁶ McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 455.

⁵⁷ Jones Kaleli, *Theological Reflection in An African Christian Worldview*, Vol.2., (Eldoret Kenya: Utafiti Foundation.2015):158-159.

⁵⁸ Telchin, *Some Messianic Jews Say, Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity*; Motyer, *The Message of Isaiah*.

⁵⁹ Brock and Glaser, *The Gospel According to Isaiah 53*, 172-23; Eyal Naveh, "The Hebraic Foundation of Christian Faith According to Reinhold Niebuhr." *Judaism* 41, no. 1 (Winter, 1992): 37. Accessed January 30, 2018 <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview /200387925? accountid=12085>.

born, raised, and educated, along with His siblings as a Jew. *Lukas* 1:26-38, “Now in the *chodesh shishi* (new moon of the sixth month) the *malach Gavriel* (angel Gabriel) was sent from *Hashem* האשם (God) to a *shtetl* (town) in the *Galil* (Galilee) called *Natzeret* (Nazareth), to a *betulah* (virgin) given in *erusin* (betrothal, engagement) to an *ish* איש (man) from the *Beis Dovid* named *Yosef ben Dovid* (Joseph), and the *shem* (name) of the *almah* (young girl) was *Miryam* (Mary). And when the *malach* approached her, he said, *Shalom* שלום (Peace), favored one! *Hashem* is with you! But she was greatly perplexed at the message and kept pondering what sort of *Shalom* greeting this might be. And the *malach* said to her, Do not have *pachad* (fear), *Miryam*, for you have found *chen* (favor) before *Hashem*. And in your womb, you will conceive and bear BEN (a son) and you will call Him SHMO YEHOSHUA (Jesus, Emmanuel). He will be *gadol* גדול (great) and will be called *Ben HaElyon* (Son of the Most High). *Adonoi Elohim* (LORD God) will give Him the *kisse* (kingship like his father of long ago) *Dovid Aviv* (King David), And He will rule over the *Beis Yaakov Olam vaed* (his people from the family line of Jacob), and his *Malchut* מלכות (Kingdom) will never come to an end. But *Miryam* said to the *malach*, How will this be, *vibahlt* (since) I do not have *daas* (seed) of an *ish*? And in reply, the *malach* said to her, The *Ruach Hakodesh* רוח הקודש (Holy Spirit) will come upon you and the *gevurah* (Power) of *HaElyon* (The Most High God) will overshadow you. Therefore, also, the one being born will be called *HaKadosh* (The Holy One), *Ben HaElohim* (Son of God). And *Elisheva* (Elizabeth) your *krovah* (relative) also has conceived a *ben* in her old age, and this *chodesh* (month) is *hashishi* (the sixth) for her who is called barren. For nothing will be impossible with *Hashem*. And *Miryam* said, *Hinei!* (Here I am!) I am the *shifcha* (servant) of *Hashem*. May it be done to me according to your *dvar* (Word). And the *malach* departed from her.” (Luke 1:26-38, ESV and NIRV translation from Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB)).

Muslim Truth

In the pre-*Muhammadian* age, we saw in the “original Arabian environment completely capable of universal appeal and amazing hospitality.”⁶⁰ The older style of *Islam*, or Arab belief systems embraced accommodation and compromise, Shepard avers.⁶¹ Arabs prior to *Muhammad*, practiced worshipping many gods and hundreds of idols, some were Jesus followers, some secular, others were Jews. A full array of beliefs and faiths until *Muhammad* converted major populations: some by choice, some by payment, some by the sword, thus narrowing the variety to very few called *umma*.⁶² Two years after the miraculous journey, a deputation of about seventy-five men invited *Muhammad* to make Medina his home. In that city, the Jews, who were looking forward to a *Messiah*, had evidently prepared their heathen compatriots for such a claimant. *Muhammad* allowed two hundred followers to elude the vigilance of the *Quraysh*, and slip into Medina, then he followed, arriving later on September 24, 622. Such was the *hegira* هجري, not entirely a flight, but a scheme of migration carefully considered for some two years.⁶³

Ghattas, Ghattas, and Wijngaards affirm that *sura 2 (al-Baqara):277* is an assurance of salvation verse that many Muslims use to claim security of their salvation; however, this verse, and others herein, does not state clearly the guarantee of a trip to heaven after physical death; it merely states they will have their reward from the Lord.⁶⁴ *Sura 48:29* says this, “*Muhammad* is *All’ah’s* apostle; those who follow him are ruthless to the unbelievers [Christians, Jews, and

⁶⁰ Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 38.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 37-39.

⁶² Shepard, *Introducing Islam*, 34-35.

⁶³ www.oneworldmagazine.org., Seventeen years later the *Caliph Umar* designated that lunar year (beginning July 16) in which the *hegira* took place as the official starting point of the Muslim era.

⁶⁴ Ghattas and Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur’an*, 39; Wijngaards, “Can We Trust the Gospels?”

conservative *Muslims*] but merciful to one another.”⁶⁵ In *sura 3 (Al-i- ‘Imran):90-91*, another salvation verse, we see the theology of *Islam*, that a *Muslim* can lose their salvation, e.g. if a follower blasphemes *All’ah*, *All’ah* will never accept their repentance, even after a person dies.

Religious Liberalism as Truth

Steven Davidson opines in “Liberalism,” that the religious liberal experience, as opposed to revelation, seems to be the line of demarcation in the definition of liberalism.⁶⁶ Various other terms have been used to define liberals and liberalism, such as modernist and contemporary, because the term liberal is perceived as being pejorative.⁶⁷ So within the three world religions discussed herein, a departure from traditional beliefs and behavior determines the course of various liberal groups, and typically the more devoted one is to the faith, the less liberal the practitioner. In Davidson’s “Denial of Substitutionary Atonement” article, he orates, historically religious liberalism traces its roots to higher criticism, introduced by German scholars during the mid-eighteen hundreds. This type of historical criticism is generally associated with Friedrich Schleiermacher, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Paul Tillich. Their findings led to an almost immediate denial of the authority of the Pentateuch.⁶⁸ Most of the mainline monotheistic denominations of today are theologically liberal, and while not every member of each of these denominations is theologically liberal, or espouses a liberal theology, the official positions of the denominations they belong to, are clearly identified as liberal.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Dawood, *The Koran*, 362.

⁶⁶ Ghattas and Ghattas, *A Christian Guide to the Qur’an*, 49.

⁶⁷ Steven Davidson, “Liberalism,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 320-22.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 322.

Chapter Nine

Can There be Only One Messiah?

B. F. Westcott writes, it is not too much to say that there is no historic event more variously supported, than the resurrection of *Yahshua*. “Nothing but the antecedent assumption that it must be false, could have suggested the idea of deficiency in the proof of it.”¹ With this closing argument, the resurrection verdict must be delivered. Every individual, upholds Josh McDowell, must decide whom to believe: the erudite philosopher, centuries removed from the Savior who walked in Jerusalem; or, the followers who walked with Him, and were martyred for Him. Whether freshman student or brilliant professor, the verdict has been clear, that Jesus Christ lived, died, and lives again to change the lives of those who accept Him as He really is.² Jesus is the transliteration of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means *Jehovah* is salvation, and the word *Messiah* or Christ is not a proper name, but a title.³ If salvation is a matter of the Father rewarding those who do good, and if *Yahweh*'s purpose was only to test Abraham's obedience, why the need for a momentous sacrifice?⁴ Jesus is unlike any other religious leader, because *Yahshua* is not a sage, but a Savior, not an avatar, but an Incarnation of YAH, not a prophet, but The *Messiah* and Master Rabbi: Jesus Christ the vessel of Salvation, and the final authority.⁵

Christianity has passion and experience, but it also has superior intellectual content that focuses on Jesus, not on the various Christians who make up Christian history. The Bible warns that support for truth will decline as we near the final judgment, but those who are to faithful the

¹ McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 435.

² *Ibid.*, 629.

³ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 479.

⁴ Halverson, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, 120.

⁵ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 503.

Lord, the elect and the saved, will always be able to recognize the essential truth as Jesus has revealed it, Bush sustains.⁶

William Lane Craig posits, that it is difficult to exaggerate the devastating effect the crucifixion had on the Disciples; for they had zero conception of a dying, buried, and rising *Messiah* (cf. Jn. 12:34). But, as Scripture recounts, “Jesus himself predicts His own betrayal, death and resurrection.”⁷ History records Christ did in fact die on the cross, according to the judgment of the many Roman soldiers, Joseph, Nicodemus, and others listed herein.⁸ Erickson hypothesizes, that *Yahshua* apparently carried no visible sign of distinctiveness, thus blending into cultural surroundings, so much so, that most took Him for an ordinary human; the son of Joseph the local carpenter. *Yahshua Messiah* came as a human, not as an angel, or recognizable as God,⁹ so as to show His church how to do culture God's way: build relationships, live a new way of life, worship in a new Temple, and join the Body that is being built up in Christ.¹⁰

Moreau and Wilson suggest that throughout the history of the church, the Christian position on salvation, apart from Christ, has been simple, clear, and consistent: Jesus is the only way to God (Jn. 14:6), and there is no other name, *Yahshua*, by which people can be saved (Acts 4:12).¹¹ In more recent times, questions have arisen, Is Jesus really the only way to God? Are non-Christian religions completely false? Would God send those who never heard of Jesus go to hell because they did not believe in Him? Furthermore, say many modern scholars, academic

⁶ Bush, *The Advancement*.

⁷ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 455.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 205.

¹⁰ Vanhoozer, Anderson, and Sleaman, *Everyday Theology*, 53; Howell and Williams Paris, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*.

¹¹ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 290; Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions."

debates on God's openness have stirred strong feelings among evangelicals, with some even maintaining that those who follow a different gospel, should not be condemned by God.¹²

Old Testament Archetype

Beilby's observation is that early Christians engaging in sharing the salvation message, had in their possession at that time, ample Old Testament material with which to develop theological arguments against other religions.¹³ The promised *Messiah* of the Old Testament is Jesus, who said, "I and the Father are One" (Jn. 10:30).¹⁴ Against the Jews who saw the *Torah* as YAH's final Word, these same early Christians developed arguments to demonstrate that Old Testament prophecies have undeniably been fulfilled in *Yahshua*, Jesus the *Messiah*, and that Jewish leaders had misused the Old Testament by becoming superstitious in their observation of the Law,¹⁵ such as the I am statements. Jesus the Christ, the Old Testament *Messiah*, spoke of prophetic references to His own deity as *Messiah*.¹⁶ An incarnation reaffirms the Biblical testimony, that the life Jesus was in fulfillment of Old Testament Biblical prophecy.¹⁷

Moreau explains, God's missionary heart is evident, as He begins the process of rolling back the kingdom of darkness and seeking His lost creation. No wonder Paul asserts that the Abrahamic Covenant stands throughout the ups and downs of Israel's history as the proper foundation for God's ultimate salvation blessing in His Son (Gal. 3:14). Walter Kaiser points out,

¹² Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 290.

¹³ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 41.

¹⁴ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 571.

¹⁵ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 42; von Wahlde, "The Jews' in the Gospel of John;" Hindson and Towns, *Illustrated Bible Survey*.

¹⁶ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 492-94.

¹⁷ Bush, *The Advancement*.

that the Old Testament version of Jesus' Great Commission, was in '*Abraam* (Abraham), who was chosen for the benefit of all peoples, and through Abraham, Israel was called to become the people of God (Gn. 12:3).¹⁸ "Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee" (KJV). The Gospels portray *Yahshua* as a master teacher who spoke with authority on all matters, *Torah* Law and redemption of sin, and was never out-argued. He was a man of compassion, strong, and with sterling character, whose life fulfilled many Old Testament prophecies and promises.¹⁹

New Testament Savior

Matthew splits the story of God's history of salvation into four missional epochs: First, the prophets proclaiming the promise of Jesus; Second, Jesus's own redemptive mission fulfilling the promise of the prophets; Third, the commissioning of the Disciples to make disciples of all 70 Nations of their day; and Fourth, the mission at the return of a Glorified Christ, to rule, to judge, and to separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Today the church stands in Matthews third epoch, and three passages in his Gospel stand out as exemplars of that epoch: (Mt. 9:35-38; 24:14; 28:16-20).²⁰ Scripture declares the need for faith in the Gospel in order to be saved, part of a larger context of the Bible story line, portraying Jesus Christ as the only possible Savior from the human dilemma, reasons Miles and Hesselgrave.²¹

Christianity hails Jesus as Lord and Savior of humanity, and as God Incarnate (Jn. 1:14). He lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death on the cross, so that people could be reconciled to a Holy God, and rose from the dead to vindicate His mission (Rom. 1:4). There is one Mediator

¹⁸ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 33.

¹⁹ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 538.

²⁰ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Missions*, 42.

²¹ Todd L. Miles, *A God of Many Understandings: The Gospel and a Theology of Religions* (Nashville, B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 21; Hesselgrave, "Contextualization that is Authentic and Relevant."

between God and humanity—Jesus Christ (1 Tm. 2:5-6). Spiritual liberation bestows on the Believer the forgiveness of sins and a righteous standing before *Yahweh*, which is received by faith alone in Christ, and by God's grace (Eph. 2:8).²² The salvation message is from God, and the content of that message is fundamental as it incorporates the centrality of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:19, 21), the fact of His coming judgment (1 Thes. 1:9-10), and the need to respond (2 Cor. 5:11-21; Eph. 2:8-9). The idea that salvation comes through works, undermines God's plan of redemption (Phil. 3:9), even though works are intimately related to the Christian Life (Jas. 2:14-26).²³

Jesus Was Just a Great Teacher

Jesus was about 30 years old when He began His ministry as *Messiah*, the Master Rabbi and Teacher. Jesus employed didactic teachings, interpersonal dialogue, and intertwining parables in order to impart the Father's truth.²⁴ Jesus of Nazareth was a man, ascribed by God to do miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22).²⁵ His teachings were confirmed and documented in an unprecedented manner for any rabbi or teacher: He was God in the flesh, and not just a great teacher. God exists, and Jesus is Lord and Savior! These are the fundamental truths of His own teaching, and that of His followers.²⁶ The first converts became adherents of Jesus, devoted to His ways until tragedy struck: then they secreted themselves in their lodgings, remaining quiet until the morning of the third day.²⁷ Simon Greenleaf orates of the Disciples, "it was therefore impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated, had not Jesus

²² Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 574.

²³ Moreau, and Colleagues, *Introducing World Missions*, 64; Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions."

²⁴ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 481.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 538.

²⁶ Bush, *The Advancement*.

²⁷ McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity* 284; Sherwood G. Lingenfelter and Marvin K. Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally: A Model for Effective Personal Relationships*, 3rd ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

risen from the dead.”²⁸ One Jewish rabbi, Pinchas Lapide, comments on this collectivist transformation, as a frightened band of Apostles about to throw away everything, yet suddenly, they changed overnight into confident missionaries, convinced of *Yahshua*’s salvation, and certainly not caught up in resurrection delusion as a way to explain such transformation.²⁹

Claims Yahshua Made of Himself

“The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father” (Jn. 5:22-23 ESV). Jesus clearly communicated that He was not simply a way or one of several paths to God, He said, I am The Way, and The Truth, and The Life; no one comes to the Father, except through Me (Jn. 14:6). From an evangelical perspective, the answer must be, yes, one must have saving knowledge in God’s Son. Jesus addressed this issue Himself during His conversation with Nicodemus, telling him that a person must be born again to see the kingdom of God (Jn. 3:3).³⁰ Jesus’ direct claims to Deity were made during the trial before the Sanhedrin, when “the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, ‘Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?’” Jesus said, “I am...” (Mk. 14:61-64).³¹

Claims Others Made About Christ

McDowell and McDowell document in the *Qur’an* which has several references to Jesus, including: presenting Jesus as a miracle worker (*sura* 3:49; 5:110), who brings signs (*sura* 2:87; 43:63), and even speaks as an infant to establish Himself as a prophet sent from *All’ah* (*sura* 19:29).³² *Sura* 3:45-6a says this, “The angels said to Mary: ‘*All’ah* bids you rejoice in a Word

²⁸ McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 309.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 284.

³⁰ Weider, “Exclusivity of Salvation,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia*, 428; Gabriel Etzel and Ben Gutierrez, *Praxis: Beyond Theory*, (Virginia Beach: Academx Publishing Services, Inc., 2012).

³¹ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 173.

³² *Ibid.*, 145, affirms the Virgin birth (*sura* 3:45; 21:91).

from Him. His name is the *Messiah*, Jesus son of Mary, He shall be noble in this world and in the world to come and, shall be one of those who are favoured”[sic].³³ In general, this could show *Qur’anic* agreement with the teaching in the Bible; however, it does not, in fact, it preaches that Jesus was not God, without divinity, in the direct statement, “there is no God but *All’ah*” (*sura* 3:62), which comes right after “in God's eyes Jesus is just like Adam, He created him from dust, said to him, ‘Be’, and he was” (*sura* 3:59). The obvious point, Jesus was not God.³⁴

Rabbinic tradition claims that Jesus was born out of wedlock, grew up acting disrespectful toward Jewish leaders, and mastered magical practices to gain a following, as well as claims that Jesus's body was found after his death, say, McDowell and McDowell.³⁵

“The common people called ‘Christians,’ hated for their abominable crimes. Their name comes from Christ who during the reign of Tiberius had been executed by the procurator Pontius Pilate. Suppressed for a moment, the deadly superstition broke out again, not only in Judea, the land which originated this evil, but also in the city of Rome, were all sorts of horrendous and shameful practices from every part of the world converge and are fervently cultivated.”³⁶

This view of new converts to Christianity comes by way of Tacitus’ *Annals*, which dates back to the time of Augustus through Nero. Tacitus was an ancient, non-Christian, Roman writer and source of significant value to Christology and Soteriology (56 to 120 A.D.). Cornelius Tacitus is generally considered the greatest Roman historian, says Robert van Voorst, and *Annals* is his finest work, acknowledged by modern historians as a great source of information about Christ.³⁷

³³ Dawood, *The Koran*, 46.

³⁴ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 146)

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁶ Meier, MJ, 89-90 in *Ibid.*, 150; Mohler, “*The Goodness of God and the Reality of Evil.*”

³⁷ van Voorst, JONT, 39 in McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 150.

The Apostle Paul in Romans concludes a discussion of the blessings and privileges given to the Jews, by praising a risen Christ as “God over all” and the Way of Salvation. What the Apostle is affirming is this: the *Messiah ah Masshiach*, is in fact exalted over the whole universe, animate and inanimate, including those Jews who willfully rejected him (Rom. 9:1-5).³⁸ “Who being in the very nature of God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage” (Phil. 2:6-11, NIV). Paul here confesses the Deity of Christ in three ways: By his pre-existent God nature; By His dual nature as human and Divine; By ultimately equating Himself with God, *Elohim Adonai, Yahweh* of the Old Testament.³⁹ John the Baptist witnessed the miracle of the dove; “And the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with You I am well pleased” (Lk. 3:22).⁴⁰

Table 2. Claims of Christ Jesus

Claim	Judaism	Christianity	Islam
I and the Father are One in the same	All Jews are sons and daughters of YHWH	Jesus is God in the flesh: Incarnate, One	Jesus is not God; <i>All’ah</i> has no son
I am the exclusive Way to The Father	The way to the Father is by obeying Law	Accepting Jesus is the only way to God	<i>Muhammad</i> is the only way to <i>All’ah</i>
I alone have the power to forgive sin	Sin is forgiven by blood offering	Jesus died and shed His blood for our sin	Only <i>All’ah</i> can forgive one’s sin
I am the <i>Messiah</i> Isaiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel prophesied	The <i>Messiah</i> will be a human, a Master Rabbi who will rule	Jesus is the <i>Messiah</i> in the OT from Genesis to Malachi	<i>Muslims</i> are torn but the 12 th <i>Mahdi</i> is their <i>Messiah</i>
You must be Born Again in My name	A person cannot be possibly born twice	One must be reborn in Jesus spiritually	Jesus is not the true Savior: <i>All’ah</i> is
You must use My name to gain the ear of My Father, I am His only Mediator	One prays directly to G-d and is in no need of any mediator, nor in any other name	Scripture says to get to the Father, one must go through the Lord Jesus only	One must pray to <i>All’ah</i> five times a day in repetitive sayings: it’s the Law

³⁸ Harris, JAG, 172 in *Ibid.*, 180.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ ESV, *Ibid.*, 182.

Detractors of Jesus as Savior of All

Evans and Manis declare, it makes no sense to say of Christianity that it has no objective truth status. If a person believes Jesus is the Son of God, it is all-important for her or him to internalize this, but if Jesus is not really the Son of God, then it is a mistake to adopt the belief that He is. It is hard to see how the proposition, Jesus is the Son of God, could become true for an individual, merely by accepting and appropriating it.⁴¹ Immanuel Kant, a famous German Enlightenment Deist and philosopher, was the author of many books, including the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Kant, had at one time, been a rational theist, but after reading David Hume, he changed his perspective to one of philosophical skepticism.⁴² This was such a profound experience for Kant, that he called it, An Awakening. Kant, along with Hume, set down the philosophical basis for agnosticism. Kant's thought was so novel and far-reaching that he ushered in what has been called a philosophical Copernican revolution. Many of today's popular ideas and attitudes were incipient in his radical philosophy, comments Linda Gottschalk in her piece, "Kant, Immanuel."⁴³ Reason signified moral and practical, not theoretical reason, and he saw no need for rational proof for faith; and although Kant believed in the existence of God, he found many of the usual accompaniments of religion to be superfluous. Historical evidence was not needed, especially if it was in the form of miracles. But by Kant's own definition, miracles are events that we cannot understand, because their operating laws are not known to us, and they never can be known.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Evans and Manis, *Philosophy of Religion*, 212.

⁴² Keller, *An Invitation to the Skeptical*.

⁴³ Linda Gottschalk, "Kant, Immanuel," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 306.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

A Skilled Campaign of Deception

Mark Rathel, in “Theories of Salvation,” posits the religious landscape can be compared to a maze, with one entrance and one exit. The entrance to the maze is the human experience in birth, life, and the paths throughout the maze; yet all but one of the paths leads to obstacles and dead-ends, only one path correctly leads out of the maze.⁴⁵ The *Qur’an* seems to acknowledge the widespread belief that Jesus died on a cross in the way it's strongly refutes that belief. The *Qur’anic* account states: people that believe this claim, that Jesus died on a cross, because they were sealed in their unbelief by *All’ah*, as a penalty for breaking a pledge, rejecting *All’ah’s* revelations, and unjustly killing prophets (*sura* 4:155). “They disbelieved and uttered a terrible slander against Mary, and said, ‘We have killed the *Messiah*, Jesus, Son of Mary, the messenger of God” (*sura* 4:156-57).⁴⁶ “Then I heard a loud voice in heaven. It said, ‘Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God have come. The authority of His *Messiah* [*Yahshua*] has come. Satan, who brings charges against our brothers and sisters, has been thrown down. He brings charges against them in front of our God [*Yahweh*] day and night.” (Rev. 12:10, NIRV).

The Great Commission

Peter believed that acknowledging Jesus Christ was essential for salvation. Peter and John had been imprisoned for healing a lame man. The following day they were confronted and asked, by what power or what name did you do this? (Acts 4:7). Peter boldly acknowledged Christ, and later stated, there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).⁴⁷ The idea of a second chance for those who fail to accept Christ for their salvation, is not supported by Scripture. The

⁴⁵ Rathel, “Theories of Salvation,” in *Ibid.*, 431; Wilson, “Salvation in World Religions.”

⁴⁶ McDowell and McDowell, *Evidence for Christianity*, 146.

⁴⁷ Etzel and Gutierrez, *Praxis*.

plea of Biblical writers was that people would accept Christ, before it was eternally too late (Heb. 2:3). Acts 1:8 communicates Christ's last words before ascending to heaven, He declared to His Disciples, and to His followers, "Today you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My Witnesses, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."⁴⁸ This declaration, known as the Great Commission, and is not a suggestion, but a command. Paul wrote, "how beautiful are the feet of those who bring Good News of good things (Rom. 10:1-15).⁴⁹ An understanding of this fact, the Great Commission, should compel each Believer to share the Gospel, all over this world.

⁴⁸ Samuel and Sugden, *Mission as Transformation*.

⁴⁹ Weider, "Exclusivity of Salvation," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 429; Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions."

Chapter Ten

Birth of the One-World Religion

Hedenquist reports, that an ecumenical group of Christian academicians announced a radical departure from traditionally-held views of salvation. Rejecting a centuries-old hallmark of Christian teaching on salvation, these ecumenical scholars, said Jews can be saved without coming to faith in Jesus Christ, claiming, Jews are in an eternal covenant with God. Members of the Christian Scholars Group on Christian-Jewish Relations, challenged the traditional Christian view of Jesus as Savior for all humankind; because faithful Jews are already in right relationship with God, they renounce missionary efforts directed at converting Jews.¹ "We know there has been a long tradition of anti-Judaism within that Christian tradition," says Joseph Tyson, Chair of the scholar's group, and Professor Emeritus at Southern Methodist University, "It's based on certain misperceptions of history, and it's theologically invalid ... We're convinced that a re-thinking of Christian attitudes toward Jews is central, indispensable and sacred."² The 10-point statement, "A Sacred Obligation," marks the latest in a series of attempts to bridge historic enmity and divisions between Christians and Jews.³

It comes in response to *Dabru Emet*, a call from Jewish scholars in September 2000, for Jews to rethink their understanding of Christianity. It follows also on the heels of a 2002 statement, in which Jews and a committee of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops said, attempts to convert Jews are "no longer theologically acceptable."⁴ Although Jews heralded the

¹ Göte Hedenquist, "Bringing the Gospel to the Jews," *The Ecumenical Review* 7, no. 3 (April 1955): 232-237, accessed February 26, 2018 [https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/232237](https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/232237).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

statement as a step forward for interfaith dialogue, evangelicals outside the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops bristled at the apparent undercutting of a bedrock teaching (See Appendix A. The Interfaith Symbol). "While that covenant [between God and Jews] is still in place, it in no way implies salvation, if it did, why would God send his son to die this horrible death if it were not necessary?" suggests James Sibley, Coordinator of Jewish Ministries for the Southern Baptist Convention.⁵ John Henry Newman (1801-1890) is widely regarded as one of the most accomplished apologists of his age, especially by Catholics. As an outspoken convert to Catholicism, his arguments for the essential truth of Catholicism continue to be widely read and highly valued, e.g. "No doctrine of the Church can be rigorously proved by historical evidence, but at the same time, no doctrine can be simply disproved by it."⁶

Correlation of Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Revelation

Derwin L. Gray, in the "Exclusivity of Christ," says unlike angels and human believers who refused to let people worship them, Jesus clearly invited, welcomed, and received worship. Thus, the Bible records all of heaven falling before Him saying Worthy is the Lamb (Rv. 5:12).⁷ "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love Him and keep His commandments" (Dn. 9:1-27 ESV). "Seventy weeks are decreed about your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness" (Dn. 9:24 ESV): "until he comes, the one to whom judgment belongs, and I will give it to him" (Ez. 21:26-27 ESV).

"Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and

⁵ ucc.org, ucc.org. "Christian Scholars Say Jews Can be Saved Without Faith in Christ," *United Church of Christ*. Staff reports (October 31, 2002), accessed July 19, 2018 <http://www.ucc.org/christian-scholars-say-jews.>; Hedenquist "Bringing the Gospel to the Jews."

⁶ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 73.

⁷ Derwin L. Gray, "Christ, Exclusivity of," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 123.

bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:14 ESV). “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (Is. 9:5-7 ESV). “With righteousness he shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth” (Is. 11:2-9 ESV). “And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him” (Dn. 7:13-14 ESV).

“Behold my Servant, whom I uphold, my Chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations” (Is. 42:1 ESV). “I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Ez. 34:11-31 ESV). Then “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent” (Is. 53:7 ESV). “He bore the sin of many and makes intercession for the transgressors” (Is. 53:12 ESV). “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with His stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5 ESV). “In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His pity, He redeemed them; He lifted them up and carried them all the days of old” (Is. 63:9 ESV).

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” (Rv. 2:7 ESV). “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing My recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Rv. 22:11-21 ESV). “I am the Lord your God. I am the Holy One of Israel. I am the one who saves you.” (Is. 43:3, NIRV). The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments, and I will never blot his name out of the book of life. I will confess his name before my Father and before his angels” (Rv. 3:5 ESV).

The One Road That Leads to YAH

Jesus is the reality of God's plan for people (Col. 2:8-12), because Jesus came as a humble and obedient servant and chose to exalt Him above all others (Heb. 2:9), claim Moreau and Etzel. He is the Lamb of God, slain before the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8), and now seated at the right hand of God (Eph. 1:20). Though the message is constant, the means to communicate that message must adapt and fit the situation to those reached (1 Cor. 9:22-23)⁸ The challenge before all believers in Christ is to maintain the changeless Gospel message in the midst of changing worldviews. When one rejects Christ, or who have not accepted Christ as their Savior, fall into one of four categories. First, there are those who have heard the Gospel and how to become a born-again Christian, yet after contemplating it, have decided to reject it. Second, those who grow up in a different religion, e.g. Islam or Judaism, although they have heard that Jesus Christ is the Savior of all people, they naively and unsympathetically except their own religion as truth, rejecting the claims about Jesus. Third, those who are followers of another religion, but have never heard of Jesus Christ, and have also never have the opportunity to accept or reject Him. The last group, those who have responded to the general revelation and chose to believe in the creator of the world; however, because they have never heard about Jesus, they also have not had an opportunity to accept or reject Him as Savior.⁹ Paul in Romans, addresses the issue of those who adhere to other religions. He notes that people who have not heard of Christ, are judged differently from those who have (Rom. 2:6-15). Part of the salvation lies in role of General Revelation, for as Paul stated, since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, His eternal power and Divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from

⁸ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Mission*, 64; Etzel and Gutierrez, *Praxis*.

⁹ Lew Weider, "Exclusivity of Salvation," in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 427.

what has been made, so that men are without excuse. Could this mean that a person can go to Heaven by accepting this General Revelation from God? To hold this view, would be to neglect the teachings of Christ and the Apostles, that the role of General Revelation indicates generalized type of understanding about the existence and nature of God; for through General Revelation, God reveals Himself as the Creator.¹⁰ “The woman said, “I know that *Messiah* [*Yitshar*] is coming. When He comes, He will explain everything to us” (Jn. 4:25, NIRV).

Conclusion

This topic of soteriology has been discussed thoroughly throughout this thesis, with quality sources in a qualitative research design, utilizing systematic processes, phenomenological and ethnographic methodologies, coding of data collection, and analysis from the researcher.¹¹ The purpose and the importance of this thesis, as well as the motive for research, originate in truth and the Great Commission, because as we know, human beings will twist the deposit of truth knowable through General Revelation, into false religions and anti-Christian philosophies. Extensive use was made of multiple Bible versions, commentaries, selective academic books, peer-reviewed journals, proper due diligence within the research, and a hermeneutic study of key terms. This researcher used inductive and deductive data analysis, reflected on personal interpretation and possible biases during and the reporting of data gathering, collection, and documentation, and utilized compare and contrast methods provided reliability of thesis research. The philosophy of salvation doctrine or soteriology was discussed in monotheistic religions with a definition of terms to better provide an understanding of salvation in the three major world religions. A historic account of Christian salvation was provided as a baseline for the topic to

¹⁰ Lew Weider, “Exclusivity of Salvation,” in Hindson and Caner, *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics*, 427.

¹¹ Cone and Foster, *Dissertations and Theses from Start to Finish*.

then discuss the Messiah conundrum: the problem in having multiple religions and with exclusivity at war with inclusivity within the salvation message of monotheism amongst various religions. We should try to discern and capitalize on points of contact with these other worldviews: Judaism, the first established monotheistic religion, consisting of Orthodox Rabbinic Jews, Liberal Jews, and Messianic Jews who believe in *Yahshua* coming first as a Lamb, then a King; Catholicism with the Salvation Doctrine of the Catholic Church, and the role of the Pope as vicar on earth; and *Islam*, the third established monotheistic religion where Muslims earn their salvation by submission to *All'ah* and *Islam's* prophet Muhammad.

The theologies behind the *Qur'an* and the Catholic Bible underwent strict epistemological research as to the salvation message, and found it opposed to the Biblical model and message. The subject of the breakdown of absolute truth and the epistemological significance in religion was explored along with several theories of truth as they relate all three religions. Research shows regarding salvation truth: Christian truth—the redemptive mission of Christ; Jewish truth—in the *Torah* and the Mosaic Law; and *Muslim* truth—in the Holy *Qur'an* with their allegiance to *Muhammad* only. So then, the question is, can there be only one *Messiah*? Evidence was presented from the Old and New Testament as to who the Savior is. He is Jesus, the Master Teacher, *Yahshua*, the One who claimed He was Christ, the *Yahshua ah Masshiach*. Therefore, one should value and carefully study the salvation arguments by *Muslims*, and Jews who discount the Divine and incarnation of *Yahshua*; Son of *Yahweh*, Savior to all who believe on Him. For today's Christian who wants to help a Jew or a *Muslim* to grasp salvation, has to create trust that the Bible is the true. Anselm crafted a dialogue between himself and the monk Boso, in which he argued that, the Incarnation was necessary to achieve human salvation.¹²

¹² Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 48.

The rise in stature of *Yahshua* as *Messiah*, led to His detractors and their skilled campaign of deception, that has now culminated in the birth of the One-World Religion. In the Bible, there is a correlation between Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Revelation as to Jesus as the coming Savior, Suffering Servant, Bright and Morning Star. As an apologist and researcher, I asked the thesis question: Do all roads lead to God? The answer presented, the only road in this interpreter's belief that leads to YAH, is by way of Jesus Christ. It is argued that we cannot understand the world as it really is, uninfluenced by our fleshly desires and religious prospects; however, since the time of Christ, it has been necessary for a person to know about the Good News, and act by faith in response to this fact. Then it will be said, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined' (Is. 9:1-2 ESV). I believe, when we see ourselves becoming bias, lax, or self-serving, stop, pray and return to sharing Christ risen as the only way to Salvation and Life.

The Apostle Paul, speaking not of men without prejudice, but of those whose lives were regulated by true piety, and whose virtues were therefore true, says, for we were saved by hope, now hope which is seen, is not hope, for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then, do we with patience wait for it, as therefore we are saved.¹³

"As we do not as yet possess a present, but look for a future salvation, so is it with our happiness, and this with patience, for we are encompassed with evils, which we ought patiently to endure, until we can come into the ineffable enjoyment of unmixed good, for there shall be no longer anything to endure. Salvation, such as it shall be in the world to come, shall itself be our final happiness. and this happiness these philosophers refuse to believe in, because they do not see it, and attempt to fabricate for themselves a happiness in this

¹³ William A. Ulmer, "Virtue of Necessity: Coleridge's Unitarian Moral Theory," *Modern Philology* 102, no. 3 (2005): 372-404, accessed January 30, 2018 <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxyliberty.edu/stable/2058739?pq-origsite=summon>; Etzel and Ben Gutierrez, *Praxis*.

life, based upon a virtue, which is as deceitful as it is proud.”¹⁴

Proposal for Further Actions by Researcher

The definition of apologetics is simply constructing a defense of one’s faith or in this case, eternal stance on exclusive salvation truth.¹⁵ The Greek word, *apologia*, means a defense involving the act of speaking away an accusation, showing that the accusation was false, and, to defend a particular belief system against all objections, says Beilby and Elmer.¹⁶ Christian apologetics is the defense of the Christian Salvation Doctrine and Biblical worldview as being objectively true, rationally compelling, and subjectively engaging.¹⁷ Apologetics done correctly, will demonstrate that Christian truth is cognitively and spiritually attractive, because it explains who we are, and how we can flourish as God’s creation, reconciled to our Creator.¹⁸ “The action of apologetics includes two aspects... one defensive and the other offensive;”¹⁹ demolishing opposing arguments, refuting those who battle sound doctrine, and commending the faith; this is what to do, argues Elmer and Lingenfelter.²⁰

According to missiologists David Bosh and Wilber Shenk (1999), we choose six motifs integral to mission that build on our foundational theme of mission, rooted in: evangelism, church planting, discipleship, Church growth, and Salt and Light living. First, the Kingdom of God; Second, Jesus as Savior; Third, the Holy Spirit; Fourth, the Church Body; Fifth, *Shalom* or

¹⁴ Edgar and Oliphint, *Christian Apologetics*, 291; Wilson, "Salvation in World Religions;" Ulmer, "Virtue of Necessity."

¹⁵ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 14.

¹⁶ Ibid., 11; Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections: Stepping Out and Fitting in Around the World*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 24; Hasker, *Metaphysics*.

¹⁸ Ibid., 25; Etzel and Gutierrez, *Praxis*.

¹⁹ Beilby, *Thinking About Christian Apologetics*, 14.

²⁰ Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections*; Lingenfelter and Mayers, *Ministering Cross-Culturally*.

peace of God; Sixth, the return of Jesus as *Yahshua ah Masshiach*.²¹ With this framework as a starting point, my proposal for further Master's Thesis action by this researcher is to create and implement an Incarnational model for cross-cultural Christian ministry. Cross-cultural ministering in urban America is accomplished best when following in the footsteps of *Yahshua*, using the Incarnation Gospeling Model. This Incarnation type ministering to urban populous is allowing the Holy Spirit to work through the agent in the cross-cultural battle field. This field includes disadvantaged youth, an aging demographic, unemployed middle-age workers, the disabled, and the chronically or terminally ill.²²

Students of theology and apologetics would do well to further study the subjects of the sound "ah" and the title "God" as both are directly connected to a sinful human crying out to a Holy Father, *Yahweh*, and insuring you ask forgiveness of the Creator God, and not an imposter god. What each Christian, missionary or congregant, ought to think about; is if they can be counted as one of those who are not ashamed to proclaim allegiance to the name above every name, Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, our Savior, for He alone deserves the title, Sovereign Lord, *Yahshua ah Masshiach*: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts 4:12, KJ21). As a whole, this researcher found the subject of salvation beliefs connected the three largest and oldest monotheistic faiths, to be an expository experience, one that brought a deeper understanding of soteriology and how the smallest ideals can be misrepresented by the sincerest people. The Bible tells of a day when Muslims, Catholics, Jews, and Evangelical Christians will be one man in *Yahshua ah Masshiach*. Even now LORD Jesus, come quickly.

²¹ Moreau, Corwin, and McGee, *Introducing World Mission 77*; Etzel and Gutierrez, *Praxis*; Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Connections*; Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*.

²² Jay Thomas Fox, THES 699 Internship Project, 2018.

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Appendix A. The Interfaith Symbol.

